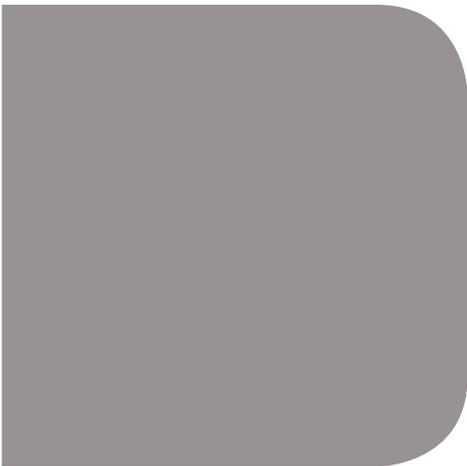


The Annual Report of Her Majesty's
Chief Inspector of Education,
Children's Services and Skills 2006/07



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Alexandra House
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October 2007

Rt Hon Ed Balls MP
Secretary of State for
Children, Schools and Families
Sanctuary Buildings
Great Smith Street
London SW1P 3BT

Christine Gilbert
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector

Dear Secretary of State

The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector 2006/07

I have pleasure in submitting my first Annual Report for the new Ofsted, as required by the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

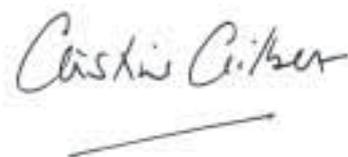
The new Ofsted, which came into being on 1 April 2007 and which is described in more detail over the following pages, provides us with a unique opportunity to support the drive for higher standards across many areas of care, education, learning and skills. My report begins with my commentary on the outcomes of inspection by Ofsted. This covers the regulation and inspection of day care and children's social care and the inspection of local authority children's services, schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning, adult education and more.

The first section of the report presents evidence from more than 36,000 inspections and regulatory visits in 2006/07, providing us with a robust evidence base for our conclusions.

The second section of the report draws together, for the first time, the findings from survey and inspection work across all of Ofsted's remit. In this section, my report describes the quality of provision across the spectrum of care and learning, commenting on the themes of improving life chances, the development of children's identity in 21st century England and acquiring and improving skills for employment.

I hope that the report will be of wide interest and that, through the broad remit of the inspection findings reported, it will contribute to the drive to raise standards and improve lives.

Yours sincerely



Christine Gilbert

Preface

Christine Gilbert
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector



This report draws on evidence from inspection and regulation broadly covering the year September 2006 to August 2007. During this period the responsibilities for inspecting services for children and learners changed substantially, with the establishment, on 1 April 2007, of the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. Combining experience and expertise from four previously separate inspectorates, the new Ofsted regulates and inspects childcare, children's social care and provision for learners of all ages. Ofsted is in a strong position to make sure that inspection is better coordinated and linked with the drive to improve standards. Ofsted also increasingly uses proportionate inspection, so that our resources are focused on areas in greatest need of improvement.

The report sets out findings which relate to the full range of the new Ofsted's remit, and does so by drawing on inspection and regulation carried out in the first part of the reporting year by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, the Commission for Social Care Inspection, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration and the previous Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education).

The first part of the report summarises the outcomes of routine inspections and regulatory visits across our remit, from childcare to adult learning. It also draws upon evidence from focused inspections in order to provide more detailed information about particular subjects or aspects of educational provision.

I have reported on the quality of childcare and early education, children's social care and children's services. Childcare refers to care for children by registered providers

in domestic premises, nurseries, children's centres and crèches; childcare is also provided in some schools, before or after the school day. Children's services include the full and integrated range of services provided by local authorities to support all children and young people. This includes social care services, such as fostering and adoption, children's homes and residential family centres. We also inspect the welfare provision in residential educational establishments.

In the second part of the report I have examined three important themes in education and care. The first is concerned with the ways in which providers of education and care seek to improve the life chances of children and older learners, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The second considers the experience of children and young people in 21st century England in the context of the contribution which education and care make to their developing awareness of personal, cultural and national identity. Finally, the report explores the effectiveness of education and training for young people and adults in, or soon to enter, the world of work.

The report refers to national test results for 2007, but very briefly, because the data are both provisional and incomplete at the time of going to press.

The report is available in printed form and on our website.

As in previous years, Ofsted will be acknowledging and celebrating the contribution of providers whose work with children, young people and adult learners is of exceptionally high quality. The list of outstanding providers, childminders, children's homes, nurseries, schools and colleges is published at the same time as this report.

Commentary

Raising standards, improving lives. Ofsted's vision – the new Ofsted's vision, that is – is to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. We seek to do this through inspection and regulation. From 1 April 2007 the reach of the new single inspectorate for education and care puts Ofsted in a unique position to support that ambition, with the potential to touch the lives of more than one third of the population of England.

This Annual Report is a baseline report for the new Ofsted. However, although it makes reference to the work of its predecessor organisations, it is necessarily very largely a report on the work of the former Ofsted. It pulls together evidence from the final year's inspection activity of the former Ofsted but also takes into account the first months of the new organisation. Ofsted is now responsible for the inspection and regulation of day care and children's social care, and the inspection of local authority children's services, schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning, adult education and more. The evidence base upon which this report is built is therefore substantial; for example, inspections of 27,000 childcare providers, 6,800 schools, over 100 colleges, over 240 inspections of adult learning and over 800 inspections of children's social care. Never before has a single inspectorate been able to report with such authority on key issues that affect people's lives.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006, which established the new Ofsted, set out three overriding considerations which we are required to bear in mind in everything we do:

- We are to promote improvement in the public services we inspect or regulate.
- We are to ensure that these services focus on the interests of the children, parents, adult learners and employers who use them.

- We are to see that these services are efficient and effective.

We have set out how we propose to discharge these responsibilities in our strategic plan. Fundamental to how we work will be our determination to engage with the users of the services we inspect. Clearly, the major test of our work will be whether we make a difference to their experiences and progress.

We should be encouraged by what we read; but there are still too many children and learners who fail to benefit from the progress made over the last few years.

Key messages from the 2006/07 Annual Report

- Of the 27,000 childcare settings inspected during the year, six out of 10 provide good or outstanding quality of care and education for young children.
- Six out of 10 schools inspected are good or outstanding in their overall effectiveness, although the proportion of secondary schools and pupil referral units that are inadequate continues to be a concern.
- The majority of children's services are working well together, and where these services are good this makes a positive difference to children's lives; but this report, and that published by the Commission for Social Care Inspection, raise a significant number of areas of concern.
- The trend of improvement in further education colleges continues.
- Adult learning also continues to improve, but with some significant and persistent weaknesses.

Commentary continued

This Annual Report provides, as usual, a summary of the 'state of the nation', particularly the quality of provision on offer; but it also offers an authoritative, evidence-based perspective on three issues of public concern. First, improving the life chances of those children and young people who have the odds stacked against them: what works, what obstacles remain, and how can high quality social care, education and training be provided for those who have most need of these services? Second, growing up in the rapidly changing society of contemporary England: how do children's and young people's experiences of education and care help to prepare them to live, participate and prosper? Third, preparing to work: how effectively are young people and adults helped to enter and succeed in the world of work?

Improving life chances: narrowing the gap

In my commentary on last year's Annual Report I wrote about the importance of providing high quality support for vulnerable children and young people; from April this year we have modified our arrangements for inspecting children's services in local authorities in order to target those services for vulnerable children and young people, those most at risk of underachieving. It is, not surprisingly, too early to report with confidence on the impact that children's services are having in securing positive outcomes for children and young people. But we are beginning to see the gains from joined up working; good examples are emerging of better education and care which make a difference to the life chances of children and young people. The five Every Child Matters outcomes remain central to raising standards and improving lives which is why they are a key dimension of Ofsted's inspection processes.

This Annual Report does not pull its punches. We are making progress; for example the majority of children's services are improving. But the challenge remains. How do we reduce the gap in opportunities and outcomes between the majority of children and young people and those who continue to lag behind? The relationship between poverty and outcomes for young people is stark; the poor performance of many children and young people living in the most disadvantaged areas is seen in

the Foundation Stage Early Learning Goals, in National Curriculum test results, and in GCSE results. Participation in higher education continues to have much to do with socio-economic background. The proportion of young people not in employment, education or training is closely correlated with their eligibility for free school meals when they were in compulsory education.

With good schools and support services around them, children find their disadvantage reduced; and yet we are still more likely to find schools which fall short of our expectations in areas of disadvantage. Ofsted's increased monitoring of schools about which we have concerns, including a number of schools we judged to be satisfactory, is paying off: we are finding that progress in around nine out of 10 of these schools is at least satisfactory. The Annual Report offers some encouragement. Inspections of academies are beginning to confirm a rising trend in effectiveness; there are examples of strong and effective leadership having a positive, and sometimes transformational, impact on pupils' progress and achievement, often from a low base. Improvements in London schools, especially those in the most challenging circumstances, are outpacing those found nationally; clearly the investment provided by London Challenge is strongly associated with these improvements.

Encouraging signs, then, but there is still a long way to go. Recurrent themes are all too apparent: poor attendance and low levels of basic skills hindering the learning of disadvantaged pupils; too many pupil referral units letting their pupils down; the poor attainment and employment prospects of most children in public care; disproportionate numbers of exclusions of Black Caribbean pupils; too many prisons in which provision for adult learners is unsatisfactory. The list could be extended, but the priority with which resources and expertise should be brought to bear on the education and care of the disadvantaged and vulnerable is clear. I highlighted in my commentary on last year's Annual Report the fundamental importance of competence in literacy and numeracy in acquiring new learning and, ultimately, in securing employment. The need to improve competence remains.

Concerns about the future of the one in five pupils who transfer from primary to secondary schools without adequate skills in literacy and numeracy have been widely voiced. The impact of the National Strategies has been reported by Ofsted since the days of the early pilot projects on literacy and numeracy. There have been some notable successes; but the fact remains that in terms of raising attainment further we have much more to do and quickly. I was pleased that Ofsted was able to contribute to the independent review of the teaching of early reading, conducted by Sir Jim Rose. The final report, published in 2006, drew attention to the fundamental importance of developing children's spoken language. It also made a number of key recommendations for schools, about teaching phonics. In particular, it recommended that systematic phonic work should be taught discretely; in other words, teachers should allocate regular time each day to make sure that children acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding to enable them to decode (to read) and encode (to write/spell) print. It also recommended that high quality phonic work should be the prime approach in teaching children how to read, so that they could move swiftly from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn'. I am convinced that if the recommendations of the review were followed, substantial improvements could be made in standards of literacy, with consequent gains in children's self-confidence as learners and progress in other areas of the curriculum.

I am also convinced that we need to focus more sharply on the experiences and needs of individual children and young people. The evidence is strong that good formative assessment – assessment for learning – raises standards. Despite persistent criticism from Ofsted that assessment is the weakest component of teaching, there is also evidence that formative assessment can be developed by teachers in a way which engages all their pupils and accelerates learning and progress. This is at the heart of personalising learning. Ofsted evidence also indicates that previously disaffected pupils who are re-engaged in their learning by seeing its relevance not only attend school more regularly, but their behaviour also improves.

Through its strategic plan Ofsted is clear about its intention to ensure that our frameworks for inspection focus sharply on the outcomes for and the needs of underachieving groups and those in vulnerable circumstances. This takes forward the lead given by the Adult Learning Inspectorate and I am pleased that we are able to comment in this Annual Report on the extent to which the training and skills sector reaches the disadvantaged and the disengaged: notably people with a disability, offenders and the long-term unemployed.

Growing up in the 21st century: issues of identity

Issues of identity – what it means to be British – are rarely far from the leader columns of British newspapers; much has been written about the challenges faced by children and young people as they grow up in Britain in the early years of this century. Young people understand less than they should about how our democracy works, the forces which have shaped it and its values, history and heritage: in short, what we understand by 'Britishness' in the contemporary world.

The attitudes and behaviours of children and young people are influenced by their experiences when they are very young and particularly by their home, family and friends. But as they grow up, childcare settings, schools, colleges and other providers can make a vital contribution to the way they celebrate diversity and challenge prejudice. The curriculum of effective schools is brought to bear on these issues. Citizenship education, personal, social and health education, history and geography all contribute. However citizenship education does not give sufficient emphasis to diversity in Britain in a rapidly changing world.

Commentary continued

Also there are gaps left when history teaching is not linked with other parts of the curriculum. Discussion about extension of the vote or Britain's role in shaping the world is not generally developed to consider voting behaviour today, or what it means to be British at a time of diversity, migration, devolution and European Union expansion.

Recent world events have raised the profile of religious education significantly, and schools have new responsibilities to promote community cohesion; at its best, religious education equips pupils to consider issues of community cohesion, diversity and religious understanding. Unfortunately 'at its best' is not a given in around half of schools, despite significant improvements in examination results in recent years.

Preparing to work: working lives

'Too many of us have little interest or appetite for improved skills. We must begin a new journey to embed a culture of learning,' wrote Lord Leitch in his foreword to last year's report on UK Skills. It is, of course, not just a matter of improving skills; it is a case of acquiring basic skills in the first instance, and the new Ofsted is well placed to inspect and comment on the process of preparing young people and adults for the workplace. This year's Annual Report sets the scene.

Successive government policies have emphasised the importance of improving skills and employability in the United Kingdom. Implicit in these has been the need to prepare young people and adults more effectively and systematically for the world of work. The challenges have been set out unambiguously: to improve the level and transferability of the UK's skill base, fully engaging employers in this process, and creating a learning culture in which the vocational and the academic are valued equally highly. This Annual Report concludes that learning providers are in no doubt about their responsibility to contribute to this transformation, but that 'while the will is there, the capacity to do so varies considerably, both within and between sectors.'

The new Ofsted is increasingly well equipped to provide an informed critique in response to three key questions:

- How effectively are skills taught, in the classroom and in the workplace, and are employers involved sufficiently in shaping the process?
- Do society's most disadvantaged groups receive the support and guidance they need to increase their employability?
- Are the arrangements for providing information, advice and guidance about work and learning opportunities equal to the Government's high expectations?

For schools, the requirement to include work-related and enterprise learning in the secondary curriculum has not yet been embraced wholeheartedly by all schools. Indeed, it may be that pupils are more enthusiastic about the opportunities than some of their teachers; there remains the impression in some schools that these opportunities are only really for the benefit of lower achieving pupils. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to report on progress here, and on positive spin-offs such as improved attendance. We should not be surprised by this; engaged pupils will be keen to attend.

There is still much more that can be done to exploit the links between the vocational and the academic curriculum; too often teachers ignore opportunities to emphasise the value of work-related skills such as communication, problem-solving, team-building skills and creativity. It is telling that the best examples are often seen in design and technology departments, where teachers are more likely to have previous industrial experience on which they can draw than those in other departments.

Work-related learning in school classrooms is in its early stages. It is significantly more embedded in post-16 provision and its quality continues to improve. Successive reports of the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning identified the development of learners' practical skills as one of the main strengths of the sector. Equally important – perhaps even more so – is the attention given to other key social and personal skills of the workplace: punctuality, teamwork and the ability to communicate clearly and confidently; and an awareness of the importance of the unwritten rituals, rewards, demands and disciplines of the workplace.

Not surprisingly, employers have been attracted by Train to Gain and the programmes it offers; after all, they focus squarely on the needs of employers. The other side of the coin has been the reluctance of providers and skills brokers to challenge employers to find the best possible learning experience for their employees, or to give them high quality information, advice and guidance. In one case study in our evidence both the employer and the learner felt short changed because too easy a route of assessment and qualification was chosen.

The most vulnerable young people aged 16 to 18 are not in education, employment or training. Making inroads in the proportion of the age group in this category will take time, but the Government has set the target of reducing the proportion by two percentage points by 2010. Early figures for 2005 and 2006 suggest that the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training is falling slightly – down to 10.3 per cent in 2006 from 10.9 per cent in 2005, but this is set against a fairly consistent proportion of disengaged young people for the past 10 years. The risk to young lives behind these statistics is alarming and unacceptable: over 200,000 young people without a foot in the door to the world of work. It is, frankly, hard to find encouragement from our inspection evidence, though an Ofsted report about centres of vocational excellence showed that large numbers of young people attending vocational courses at these centres moved on to post-16 provision, either at a local college or into related training.

Ofsted's role: raising standards and improving lives

I am writing this commentary as I approach the end of my first year as Her Majesty's Chief Inspector. Before taking up this post I was very much aware of the difference high quality inspection could make to a local area, and indeed to the lives of children, young people and adults. It has been an encouraging feature of my first year to see many examples of where inspection and regulation have made a difference. It has also been encouraging to hear how much the users of the services we inspect and regulate appreciate what we do. For example, in a recent independent survey only four per cent of parents said they were not in favour of school inspections. Those who call for the end of universal inspection should listen carefully to the views of users: children and young people, parents and carers, and employers.

I was also encouraged to read the findings of a survey commissioned by the National Union of Teachers, indicating that the new system of Ofsted inspection has been welcomed by teachers and headteachers. It reported that there are high levels of support for aspects such as the short notice of inspection, the reduction of time spent in schools by inspectors, and the greater focus on the school's leadership and management. It stated in addition that 'there also seems to be growing support for the view that Ofsted inspections help schools improve.'

For much of our work, however, it is the quality of an inspection – often the wisdom of an individual inspector – that makes the difference: reflective professional dialogue and well-judged feedback. We put a good deal of effort into ensuring inspections are of the highest quality, but there is more we can do: better inspections make more of a difference. An inspection system is only as good as the difference it makes, and I am determined that across all we inspect we shall not just hold providers and institutions accountable, we shall actively promote and on occasions demand improvement. Ofsted itself does not bring about improvement although it acts as a catalyst for improvement.

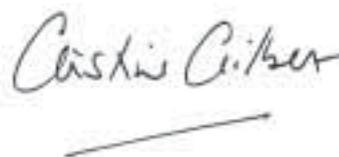
Commentary continued

Inevitably, therefore, we focus on those who are charged with bringing about improvement; they must be held accountable for what they do.

In my commentary on last year's report I wrote of Ofsted's work being rooted in moral purpose. Ofsted's strategic plan begins the process of translating this moral purpose into a challenging programme of work for the next three years; I make no apology for emphasising our ambition and our sense of urgency. I see no reason why every school should not now aspire to be a good school; nor do I see why the services that support children and young people should not now be strong and effective.

Where necessary I am determined that inspection will ask new or more demanding questions, sometimes about areas of national concern such as the ways in which institutions promote community cohesion. And sometimes in areas where we are quite rightly asked to 'raise the bar': what is satisfactory and unsatisfactory behaviour in schools, for example. I think it is right to make this particular issue a priority. Every child has the right to feel safe in school. And any behaviour which has a negative impact on their learning is unacceptable.

But Ofsted also works in a climate in which it is important to reduce burdens on those providing services and in which efficient use must be made of our limited resources. I am also determined, therefore, that Ofsted brings its resources to bear proportionately and intelligently on those areas and institutions where children and learners are most likely to be at risk of failure. We cannot afford to let inspection stand still.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christine Gilbert". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Christine Gilbert

Key findings



Key findings

- Across the range of Ofsted's inspection remit, inspection evidence shows a broadly positive picture; the work of the great majority of providers is at least satisfactory, and some of it is good or outstanding.
- There is much to be done if the workforce in this country is to be equipped with the skills necessary to enable it to compete successfully in the global economy during the 21st century. Nevertheless, inspection shows that colleges of further education are rising to the challenge and the adult skills sector is increasingly engaged with employers and in broadening the range of opportunities for learners.
- In seven in 10 early years settings inspected, children are enjoying what they do as well as achieving well. In a large majority of schools, effective care and support are mirrored by good or outstanding personal development on the part of pupils. In many colleges there is a high quality of personal support for learners, while the adult learning sector provides a second chance for many to re-engage in education and training in ways which meet their personal needs and circumstances.
- From childcare to the adult skills sector, inspection shows that the gap between the advantaged majority and the least advantaged can be reduced by good and outstanding provision in which staff and learners alike are committed to high levels of achievement and believe that they can be reached.
- In other provision, the progress of learners across the age range is hindered by poor basic skills in literacy and numeracy, and by inadequate provision to improve them.
- While there is much good work in the social care and educational sectors in enabling children in public care to succeed, overall not enough is being done to raise their achievement and aspirations; the gap between the outcomes for them and for other learners is too great.
- Too often in schools, the planning of the curriculum does not make the coherent links between studies in different areas that would enable pupils to develop a secure sense of personal, national and cultural identity.
- The proportion of inadequate provision, especially in secondary schools and pupil referral units, is a continuing cause for concern.
- 85% of childcare settings which were previously inadequate and were reinspected in 2006/07 are now satisfactory or better.
- 92% of schools made subject to a notice to improve in 2005/06 and reinspected in 2006/07 are now satisfactory or better.
- Improvement in provision is evident across childcare, education and adult skills. Where specific weaknesses have been highlighted by inspection, improvement has followed in: measures to ensure child safety; partnership with parents; leadership and governance; self-evaluation; and assessment and planning of learning.

Good or outstanding provision is found in:

- 58% of childcare
- 61% of primary schools
- 51% of secondary schools
- 61% of colleges
- 54% of children's homes (of 347 children's homes which have had full inspections since April 2007)
- 78% of children's services provided by local authorities.

Inadequate provision is found in:

- 4% of childcare
- 5% of primary schools
- 10% of secondary schools
- 3% of colleges
- 16% of children's homes (of 347 children's homes which have had full inspections since April 2007)
- 2% of children's services provided by local authorities.

Quality and standards in care, early education, schools, colleges, adult learning and skills, and children's services



Quality and standards in care, early education, schools, colleges, adult learning and skills, and children's services

Ofsted inspects and regulates a range of providers involved in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It reports on the quality and standards of childminding and day care. It also reports on the quantity of and trends in childcare and early education to inform the Government's strategy of securing sufficient childcare to help parents seeking to return to work.

This section of the Annual Report summarises the key findings from the range of Ofsted's statutory inspections during 2006/07. On 1 April 2007, Ofsted became a single inspectorate covering care, education and skills. Inspection findings reported here cover different time periods as described at the start of each section. The number of inspections carried out in each sector is shown in Annex 2 (p.105) and, where appropriate, more detailed inspection findings are shown in Annex 3 (p.107).

The key findings are based on evidence from inspection data and from sampling reports from regular inspections of:

- childcare and early learning
- maintained schools and pupil referral units
- independent schools that are not members of associations affiliated to the Independent Schools Council or the Focus Learning Trust
- further education colleges
- the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
- secure settings for young people, including secure children's homes, young offender institutions and secure training centres
- provision for adult skills
- providers of initial teacher training
- children's social care
- children's services provided by local councils.

A glossary is provided in Annex 4 (p.114). It is not intended to be exhaustive but explains some of the key vocabulary used in this report.



Childcare and early education

Introduction

1 In this section we report on the scale of the early years and childcare sector and the quality of provision, improvements and regulatory action taken during the year July 2006 to June 2007.

2 Early years settings include pre-school groups, children's centres, accredited childminders, nursery and reception classes in primary schools, nursery schools and private nurseries. All settings in receipt of government funding to deliver free early years education are required to provide the Foundation Stage curriculum.

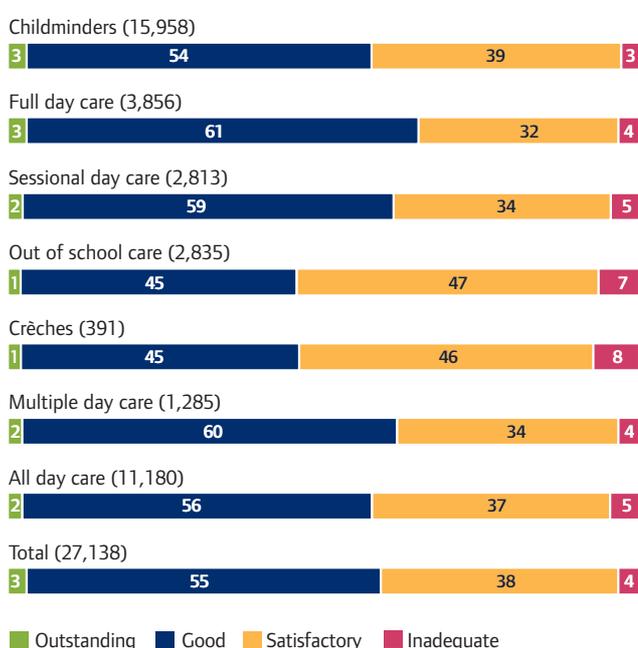
3 The Foundation Stage is the first stage of the National Curriculum, focusing on the distinct needs of children from the age of three until the end of the reception year of primary school. The curriculum for this age range is expected to be provided through planned play activities so that all children experience the best possible start to their education.

4 This is the second year of reporting on how well children attending registered early years and childcare settings are supported in relation to the Every Child Matters outcomes.¹ We report on 27,000 inspections, including 7,000 of settings that also provide early education.² The information is supplemented from small-scale surveys, looking in more depth at certain aspects of provision.

The quality of childcare and early education

5 Of the 27,000 care and integrated settings inspected during the year, 18% were inspections of providers who had registered in the previous 12 months.³ Over half of all those inspected provide good or outstanding quality of care and education for children. The quality of provision varies across the different types of provider, as can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Overall quality of childcare by type of provider: July 2006 to June 2007 (percentage of providers inspected)



Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. The figures in parentheses are the latest numbers of inspections for providers active in June 2007. Outstanding = exceptional settings that have excellent outcomes for children; good = strong settings that are effective for children; satisfactory = settings that have acceptable outcomes for children but which have scope for improvement; inadequate = weak settings that have unacceptable outcomes for children.

¹ *Every Child Matters* (CM 5860), DfES, 2003, www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/publications, identified five outcomes to which all children are entitled. See also p.18.

² For explanations of early education and other terms used in this section of the report, please refer to Annex 4 (p.114).

³ Latest number of inspections for providers active in June 2007.

Childcare and early education continued

6 This is the second year of reporting using the early years inspection framework which was introduced in April 2005.

7 The overall quality of childcare shows a reduction since 2005/06 in the proportion of childminders judged to be good or outstanding. This may reflect the fact that a higher proportion of newly registered childminders was inspected this year compared with the previous year. The proportion of good or outstanding group day-care providers is 2% higher this year, with a more marked increase in good or outstanding full day-care settings. The proportion of settings inspected which provided good or outstanding early education is 6% higher than last year.

The quantity of childcare and early education

8 There has been little change in the number of places available for children during the year. The number of registered providers has fallen slightly, while the number of places for children has risen a little (see Figure 2, and Figure 3, p.18).

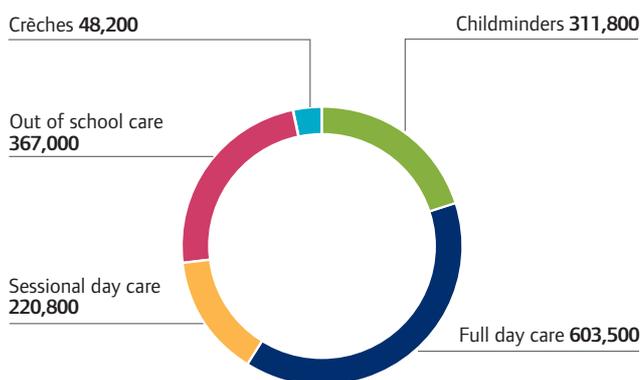
9 At the end of June 2007 there were 105,000 registered providers compared with almost 108,000 in June 2006 – a drop of 3.0%.⁴ This slight fall tends to mask a relatively volatile sector. There is a high turnover of providers, with 15,000 new registrations this year. However, more providers have left the register, over 18,000 through cancellation or resignation; more providers resigned because they had no children on their roll; and Ofsted cancelled more registrations because of providers' failure to pay the annual fee.

10 However, the number of childcare places available has risen by 0.4%, because, overall, smaller settings have been replaced by fewer, larger ones. A reduction in the number of sessional care providers and childminders has been offset by rising numbers of full day-care settings. Moreover, some sessional care settings have changed to full day care by extending their opening hours. The modest increase in childcare places overall during the year compares with a 7.19% rise over the previous two years. The increase is in places available and a considerable number of places are unfilled nationally.

11 Growth in the availability of early education in the private, voluntary and independent sector has slowed. The number of early years settings offering early education rose by over 500 from June 2006 to 20,900 in June 2007. This 2% growth compares with a 6% growth in the previous year.

12 Ofsted continues to refuse to register a small number of applicants because they are unsuitable. This year Ofsted refused registration to 30 applicants.

Figure 2: Number of childcare places: June 2007 (total 1,551,200)



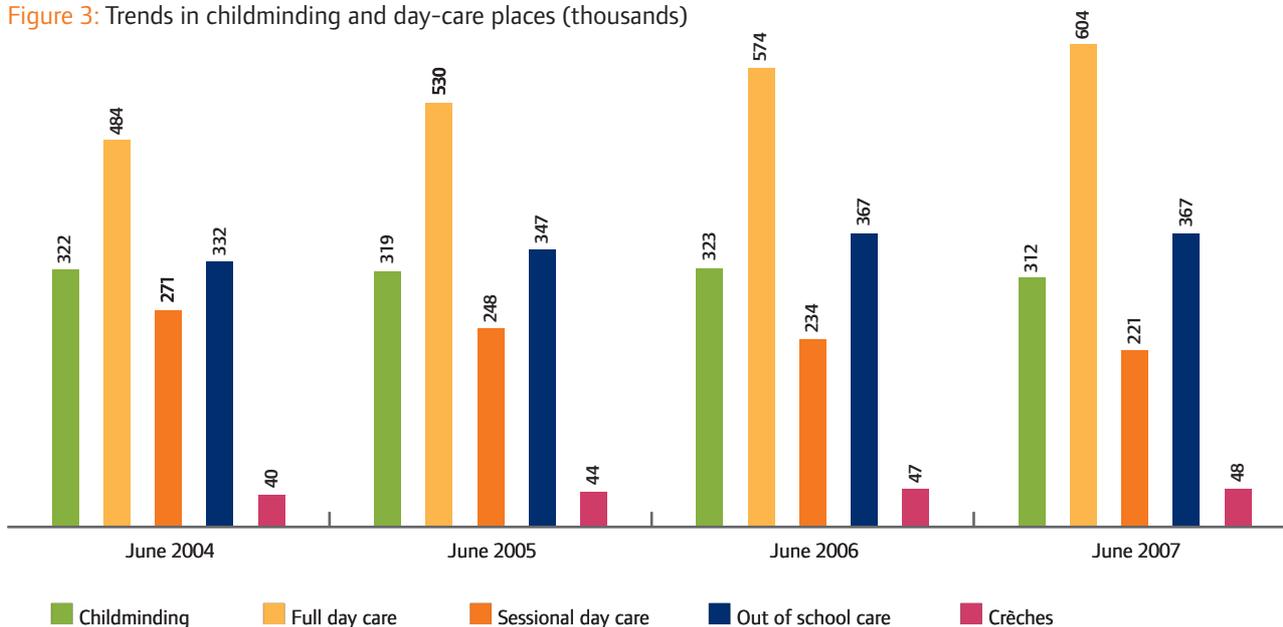
⁴ Section 79A of Part XA of the Children Act 1989 (as inserted by the Care Standards Act 2000) requires that all care of children aged under eight years for over two hours a day, over more than five days a year, by adults who are not relatives, must be registered.

The proportion of settings inspected which provided good or outstanding early education is 6% higher than last year.



Childcare and early education continued

Figure 3: Trends in childminding and day-care places (thousands)



Outcomes for children

Overview

13 This section is based on inspections of early years providers during the year, supported by small-scale surveys looking in more detail at children’s relationships and their personal, social and emotional development.

14 Overall, 58% of settings inspected provide good or outstanding childcare (see Figure 4, p.19). For full day-care settings, the proportion is 64%.

15 Ofsted judges early years provision against four of the five Every Child Matters outcomes: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; and making a positive contribution. A judgement is made about how effectively a setting is organised to support children in achieving the outcomes.⁵

16 Most providers promote outcomes for children well. For each of the four Every Child Matters outcomes inspected by Ofsted for young children, over half the registered providers inspected are judged to be good or outstanding. They are particularly successful in helping children to enjoy what they do and to make good progress in their learning and development.

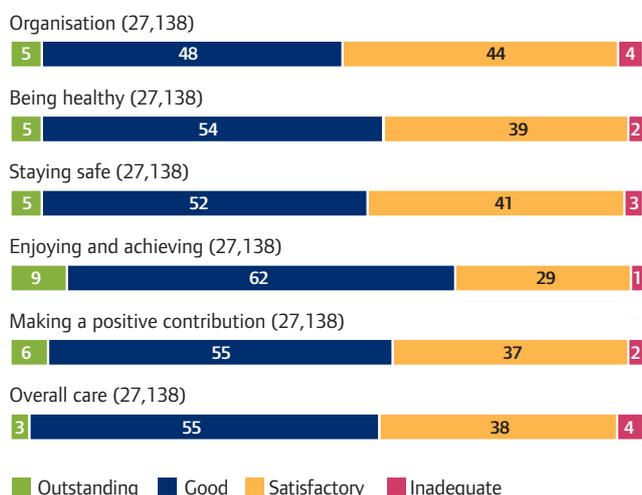
The five Every Child Matters outcomes:

- being healthy: enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle
- staying safe: being protected from harm and neglect
- enjoying and achieving: getting the most out of life and developing the skills for adulthood
- making a positive contribution: being involved with the community and society and not engaging in anti-social or offending behaviour
- achieving economic well-being: not being prevented by economic disadvantage from achieving their full potential in life.

⁵ In assessing how well providers support outcomes for children, inspectors refer to: *National standards for under 8s day care and childminding*, DfES, 2003, www.surestart.gov.uk; *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage* (QCA/00/587),

2000, www.qca.org.uk/qca_5984.aspx, www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk; and *Birth to three matters: a framework to support children in their earliest years*, SureStart, 2003, www.surestart.gov.uk.

Figure 4: Effectiveness of provision for children: July 2006 to June 2007 (percentage of providers inspected)



Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Being healthy

17 Good health is vital for children’s successful all-round development. Of settings inspected, 59% are good or outstanding in encouraging children to be healthy.

18 In the best settings, children learn well about healthy eating and are very well nourished by a balanced, wholesome diet that includes fresh fruit and vegetables. In these settings, providers liaise closely with parents to promote healthy eating, and children talk about the foods that are good for them and why. Children learn to protect themselves from germs, for example by washing their hands carefully before lunch. They stay healthy by being physically active, enjoying outdoor play in all weathers and travelling regularly to visit areas such as the local park or a soft play centre. Children in these settings develop their skills of coordination, balance and awareness of space, for example by riding on tricycles, moving to music, skipping and playing ball games. They are also protected well from ill-health through adults being vigilant, monitoring health needs and taking steps to prevent the spread of illness.

19 Improvements that providers have made following actions set and recommendations made at their previous inspections include: better food safety and hygiene; making fresh drinking water available to children; ensuring that there is always an adult present with a current first aid qualification; obtaining parents’ written permission before administering medication; and introducing a policy for parents on excluding sick children.

20 Of the settings inspected, 2% are inadequate in promoting children’s health. These settings often fail to provide such things as: an appropriate and balanced diet; enough opportunities for children to develop through physical play; or appropriate practices in response to accidents or to promote good hygiene.



Childcare and early education continued



Staying safe

21 Children's safety is paramount and 57% of the settings are good or outstanding in promoting children's safety. In the best settings:

- providers are vigilant and have comprehensive policies and procedures in place to protect children in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board requirements
 - adults are vetted carefully for suitability, and very effective arrangements ensure that no unvetted adult is left unsupervised with children
 - adults are fully aware of possible signs and symptoms of abuse; they are alert to any unexplained injuries to children and they know exactly what to do should they have a concern
 - effective security arrangements prevent children leaving unnoticed and control the arrival and departure of visitors
 - adults carry out thorough risk assessments routinely and take effective steps to prevent accidents
 - the equipment children use promotes their safety – for example, soft flooring in activity areas to reduce injuries from falls, and outdoor canopies to shelter children from the sun and rain
- children learn well about how to keep themselves safe, because adults give clear explanations and gentle reminders about how they should do so
 - children develop a sense of road safety through role play, talking about safety on the roads, and supervised experiences of crossing roads safely.

22 Improvements that providers have made to help children stay safe following recommendations at previous inspections include: better awareness and arrangements to safeguard children from abuse or neglect and to respond to allegations; clearer fire safety procedures; and risk assessments of the premises, with action to minimise risks.

23 Most of the providers inspected are good or outstanding. However, 3% of providers were judged inadequate as they did not do enough to ensure that children were kept safe. In these settings, while children may not have been at immediate risk of harm, their safety was not supervised sufficiently and there were unacceptable safety hazards or adults were not confident in identifying and responding appropriately to a child protection concern. Inspectors always take immediate enforcement action whenever the safety of a child is at risk.

24 Serious incidents are very rare in relation to the total of over 1.5 million childcare places available each day in England; however, every serious case is a matter of concern. During the year, 67 serious incidents were reported to Ofsted. Each incident involved a different setting. All cases were investigated and 55 of the investigations are complete. Of these 55, five providers resigned their registrations and Ofsted cancelled three registrations. In 18 cases, Ofsted issued notices requiring providers to take action to improve provision. In three cases, court proceedings followed. In the remaining cases, there was no need for Ofsted to take regulatory action following investigation. Some of these incidents were unconnected to the quality of childcare, such as when a child was taken unexpectedly ill or a pre-existing medical condition suddenly deteriorated. In other cases, Ofsted found no evidence of concern about the quality of care, or the providers were found to be complying with the National Standards and had already taken appropriate steps to deal with the issue raised.

Enjoying and achieving

25 Of the settings inspected, 71% are good or outstanding in encouraging children to achieve well and enjoy what they are doing (see vii, p.99). Six out of 10 settings providing government-funded early education are good or outstanding in helping children make progress towards the early learning goals.⁶

26 In the best settings, children engage enthusiastically in a range of stimulating activities; they learn to be creative and they are engrossed in role play and imaginative games. In these settings, children learn about language through books, talking and listening, and they investigate how numbers work. Adults understand how children learn and ensure that activities are challenging and interesting. Staff know the National Standards, the curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage and the Birth to Three Matters framework. They apply these effectively to promote children's learning. Children enjoy good relationships with each other and with key adults, showing concern and offering help to each other. Adults in these settings show children how they value their ideas and their achievements; this promotes children's self-esteem and encourages them to try new experiences.

27 Since their previous inspections, providers have generally improved their methods of helping children to enjoy and achieve, for example by: increasing opportunities for physical and creative play; supporting early reading and writing skills; assessing individual children's progress regularly to plan their next steps in learning; and evaluating frequently how well they are supporting children's development, particularly that of the younger ones.

28 A small proportion (1%) of settings is inadequate in promoting children's enjoyment and achievement. In these settings, children are not sufficiently stimulated or engaged and so are not learning effectively.

Making a positive contribution

29 Of the settings inspected, 61% are good or outstanding in helping children to make a positive contribution (see vii, p.99). In the best settings, children learn about their own and others' feelings, cultures and beliefs by talking about their home lives and experiences, by seeing positive images of all members of society and through imaginative play. In these settings, each child's individual needs are addressed, including special needs, and, where necessary, special equipment enables all children to participate in activities. Providers work closely with parents and with other professionals to ensure that particular needs are met and that children learn about right and wrong and how to behave responsibly.

30 Following previous inspections, providers have generally improved their support for children to help them to make a positive contribution. They use, for example, a more varied range of resources and opportunities to promote children's understanding of their own communities and the wider world. Providers exchange more information with parents to ensure that children's individual needs are met, and they have developed more effective ways to manage children's behaviour.

⁶ The early learning goals establish the expectations of what most children will achieve by the end of the Foundation Stage.

Childcare and early education continued

31 Very few (2%) settings are inadequate in helping children to make a positive contribution. In these settings, children are not learning to value their own and others' different cultures and backgrounds; providers are not supporting children for whom English is an additional language; children are not learning acceptable ways to behave; or there are no details for parents about how to make a complaint. In these cases, Ofsted sets actions for providers and reinspects within a year to check on the progress made.

Organisation, leadership and management

32 Over half of the settings inspected are good or outstanding in the way they are organised for childcare. In the majority of settings inspected that provide funded early education, the leadership, management and organisation are good or outstanding. In the best settings:

- adults are highly experienced and well trained; they have a strong working knowledge of young children's development and how they learn
- good adult to child ratios enable adults to be actively involved with children throughout the session and there are plenty of opportunities to work with individual children
- the staff team members work well together and they plan and share the monitoring of children's development
- space and resources are organised attractively for children, to provide a wide range of activities; the resources are arranged carefully to support both adult-led and child-led play
- the structure of each session is clear, so children are relaxed and move around calmly and confidently
- children and their parents share their own cultural and religious festivals with the other children
- procedures and individual records for safe and effective provision are clear and accurate; they are available to staff and to parents and confidential details are kept securely
- where funded early education is provided, activities are planned in a balanced way to cover all six areas of learning.⁷

33 Improvements that providers have made in their organisation following recommendations at previous inspections include:

- introducing more effective staff vetting at recruitment
- ensuring that there are sufficient adults present
- maintaining accurate records, including of attendance.

34 Of all the settings inspected, 4% are inadequate in organisation or management. These settings are not meeting the range of the children's needs. For day-care providers, the shortcomings include:

- inadequate vetting of new staff
- no planning for children's learning or assessment of progress; insufficient stimulation for children
- too few staff who are involved with the children.

For childminders, weaknesses include:

- no first aid training
- lack of understanding of their responsibilities under the National Standards
- absence of required documents and information concerned with children's safety and well-being, including accident records and complaints information for parents.

Improvement

35 Ofsted reinspects within a year settings that provide inadequate care. Most have improved following their earlier inspections. Of the 1,321 settings which were providing inadequate care and were reinspected this year, most had improved and one in five is now good. However, 197 settings remained inadequate at the second inspection. Of these, 99 had a third inspection during the year and 82 of them are now at least satisfactory. The challenge now is to drive up the quality of care to good or better. Stringent actions have been set for the remaining 17 and they continue to be monitored.

36 During the year, Ofsted also reinspected 247 settings that were previously providing inadequate early education. Of these, 82% have improved. While none is outstanding, 14% are now good, and 67% are satisfactory. However, 45 settings remain inadequate. Of these, 27 have received a third inspection and all but five of the 27 are now satisfactory or better. As with the provision of care, more needs to be done to improve the quality of education beyond satisfactory to good or better.

Scope for further improvement identified during inspection

37 In settings where there were concerns about particular aspects, 4,300 actions were required of providers during the year. The actions were mainly to ensure that: procedures to check adults' suitability to work with children are in place and full records are maintained; sufficient numbers of staff are present with the children; safe practice exists in giving medicines to children; and the necessary records are kept to support children's safety and well-being.

38 In settings judged to be good or satisfactory there is still scope for further development, and inspectors identify areas for improvement. Over 76,000 such recommendations were made during the year. These included asking providers to improve such things as:

- the appropriateness of activities to meet the different needs and interests of all children
- consistency in managing behaviour
- children's awareness of cultural and religious diversity
- adults' understanding of learning difficulties and disabilities
- outcomes for under-threes by using an approach in line with *Birth to Three Matters*
- approaches to risk assessment
- the quality of records and information to parents about complaints.

Recommendations for improvements in early education included: increasing parents' involvement; ensuring that children of differing abilities are fully involved in activities and appropriately challenged; and making better use of assessment in planning for children's next steps.

Compliance with the National Standards

39 Parents and the general public raised 7,600 concerns with Ofsted about standards of care for children during the year. This figure is higher than in 2005/06. It includes a rise of 440 complaints with possible child protection implications. This increase may not be surprising, given the high level of public interest and concern about these issues generally. In particular, there was an increase in the following categories of allegations: individuals were not suitable to have unsupervised access to children; premises were unsafe; child protection procedures were not followed; and records were inadequate to ensure children's safety and well-being. There was a decrease in the number of allegations about the adequacy of the numbers of adults present, partnership with parents, and the management of children's behaviour.

40 When concerns are raised, including complaints, Ofsted's role is to check whether the provider continues to meet the relevant National Standards and to take firm action where appropriate. In 70% of cases raised, after investigation, Ofsted took no further action because either the concern had been resolved, the registered person had already taken remedial action or there was no evidence to substantiate the concern. For the remaining 30%, Ofsted required action to be taken. Formal warnings were given in 2% of cases raised, indicating that a further offence was likely to result in prosecution. In a few cases (3%) Ofsted took enforcement action.⁸

Ofsted reinspects within a year settings that provide inadequate care. Most have improved following their earlier inspections.

⁸ Ofsted can take the following range of enforcement action: issuing a notice of non-compliance with regulations, requiring the provider to take action by a set date; bringing a prosecution; administering a Caution on Record as an alternative to

prosecution; removing, varying or imposing conditions of registration; cancelling a registration; and applying to a magistrate's court for an emergency order to vary, remove or impose conditions or to cancel registration.

Maintained schools



Introduction

41 Since September 2006, 6,848 inspections of maintained schools have been carried out.⁹ This figure includes the inspection of 5,151 primary schools, 1,142 secondary schools and 320 special schools. This year 20% of schools inspected received a lighter touch inspection, with fewer inspectors in school and for less time. These were schools with performance data and previous inspection outcomes which indicated that their provision was likely to be effective. In April 2007, this proportion was raised to 30% of schools on a trial basis. During the academic year 2006/07, Ofsted also carried out surveys of work in subjects or aspects of education by visiting samples of schools. Some of the detail of survey inspection findings is reported in the thematic section of this report (p.63).

Overall effectiveness

42 Of the maintained schools inspected during the academic year 2006/07, the overall effectiveness of 94% is at least satisfactory; in 60% it is good or outstanding (see Figure 5, p.25). These figures are similar to those for 2005/06 but the proportion of outstanding schools has risen to 14%, from 11% in 2005/06, and the proportion judged inadequate has fallen from 8% to 6%.

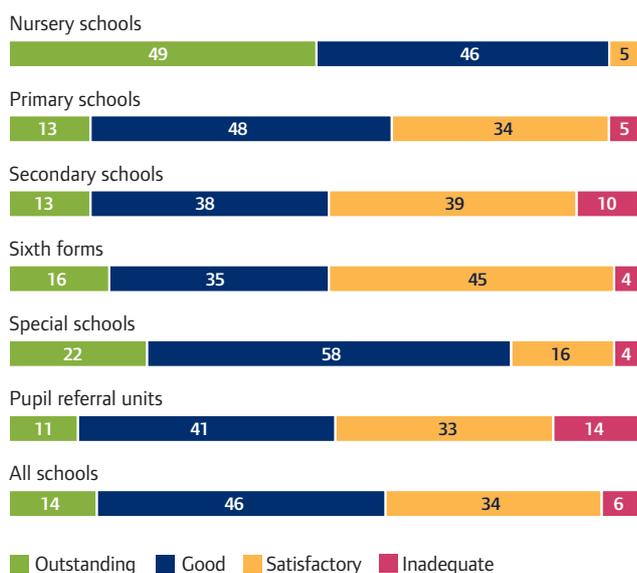
This is the case for all types of maintained school except for pupil referral units (PRUs) and special schools, in which there have been slight increases in the proportion judged inadequate. Pupils' achievement is good or outstanding in the majority (60%) of schools inspected (see Figure 6, p.27).

43 Most nursery schools inspected are good or outstanding and none is inadequate. The proportion of good or outstanding infant schools is much higher than that for junior schools and that for the primary phase overall, while the percentage of good and outstanding primary schools is higher than in the secondary phase. Half of the secondary schools inspected are good or outstanding. The proportion of inadequate secondary schools has fallen from 13% in 2005/06 to 10% this year, but the figure is still too high and is a cause for significant concern. The proportion of sixth forms judged to be inadequate is 4% compared with 6% in the previous year.

44 The percentage of good or outstanding special schools is better than that for maintained schools as a whole. Of special schools inspected, 80% are good or outstanding and only 4% are inadequate. Effective special schools take great care in tailoring the provision for individual pupils, often by drawing upon external expertise. These schools have high expectations, regardless of the pupils' difficulties, they record pupils' progress in detail and they work closely

with parents. In the small number of inadequate special schools, the teachers experience difficulty in catering for the complexity of the pupils' needs, sometimes because there has been a change in the nature of the intake and the pupils' problems have become more severe or diverse.

Figure 5: The overall effectiveness of schools inspected since September 2006



Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those schools that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements. Sixth form colleges are discussed in the colleges section of this report.

Of the maintained schools inspected... the overall effectiveness of 94% is at least satisfactory; in 60% it is good or outstanding.

45 As in 2005/06, the proportion of inadequate pupil referral units, for which local authorities have significant powers and responsibility, is too high. Pupil referral units cater for some of the most vulnerable pupils, and of those inspected, while 52% are good or outstanding, 14% are inadequate. These inadequate units have approximately 700 pupils on their combined rolls. They lack a clear vision for their pupils and offer an uninspiring curriculum. As a result, they fail to improve the pupils' attendance or reduce days lost through exclusion. Effective pupil referral units rekindle their pupils' interest in learning, often with the help of external providers and work placements. They equip the pupils with the skills and qualifications to cope with re-entry to mainstream schooling or with a move to employment and further learning.

46 In approximately seven out of 10 schools, self-evaluation and the capacity to improve are good or outstanding. The majority (64%) of secondary schools are good or better in terms of the quality of their self-evaluation, and 74% of secondary schools show good or outstanding capacity to improve. Of primary schools inspected, self-evaluation is good or outstanding in 66% of cases, while the capacity to improve is at least good in 72%.

47 In the last two years, inspectors have judged how well schools promote the five outcomes for children and young people, which are set out in *Every Child Matters*.¹⁰ The pattern noted last year has continued in that, for all types of school, judgements on the pupils' enjoyment of their education, staying safe, being healthy, making a positive contribution and contributing to future economic well-being are all better than those for their achievement. A very large majority of schools provide well for pupils' enjoyment, safety, health and their contribution to the community. Most schools prepare pupils at least satisfactorily for their future economic well-being but, where standards are low, pupils are hampered by weaknesses in their basic skills in literacy and numeracy.

¹⁰ The government Green Paper, *Every Child Matters* (CM 5860), DfES, 2003, www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/publications, set out a programme based upon the following five outcomes for children and young people: being healthy; staying safe; enjoying and achieving; making a positive contribution; achieving economic well-being; see also p.18.

Maintained schools continued

48 The key features of successful schools include: high aspirations for the pupils' personal and academic development; clear-minded leadership, shared among an effective senior team; consistently good teaching; and a determined approach to tackling any hindrances. Effective specialist schools ensure that work in the specialism permeates the rest of the curriculum. Improvements in teaching and learning in the specialist subject are therefore replicated in other areas.

49 The small proportion of schools that are struggling usually recognise their weaknesses but have been unable to overcome them. In secondary schools in particular, this is linked to weak leadership and management and ineffective teaching and learning. Sometimes difficulties in recruiting permanent staff, or shortcomings in the subject knowledge of teachers, contribute to provision that is not good enough to raise standards to acceptable levels. However, in almost all schools, the care provided for pupils is at least satisfactory; in a large majority (77%) it is good or outstanding.



Achievement and standards

50 Results of the 2007 Key Stage 1 National Curriculum assessments in reading show that, as in 2006, 84% of seven-year-old pupils achieved Level 2 or above, the standard expected for their age. In mathematics and in science the proportions of pupils reaching Level 2 or above were the same as for 2006 at 90% and 89% respectively. In writing, 80% of pupils achieved the expected standard for their age, a fall of one percentage point on the figures for 2006. Girls outperformed boys in each of the assessments but particularly in reading and writing.

51 In the 2007 Key Stage 2 National Curriculum tests, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above, the standard expected for their age, increased in English by one percentage point to 80%. In mathematics and science, there were also increases of one percentage point in attainment at Level 4 or above, to 77% and 88% respectively. Although boys' attainment has improved, girls continue to outperform them in English and particularly in writing, in which the gender gap at Level 4 and above was 15 percentage points. In mathematics, however, boys' attainment was slightly higher than that of girls, and in science, the proportion of boys achieving Level 4 or above was only one percentage point lower than that of girls.¹¹

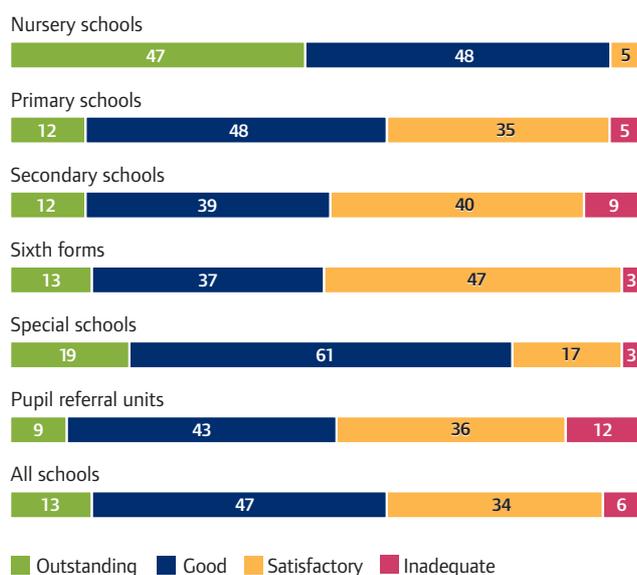
52 The percentage of pupils achieving Level 5 or above in the 2007 Key Stage 3 tests rose by one percentage point in English to 74%, fell by one percentage point in mathematics to 76%, and increased by one percentage point in science to 73%. Girls outperformed boys; the difference was greatest in English overall and in writing, at 13 percentage points; in mathematics and science it was only one percentage point.¹²

¹¹ DCSF statistical first release SFR 24/2007, August 2007, www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000737/SFR24-2007.pdf.

¹² DCSF statistical first release SFR 24/2007, August 2007, www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000737/SFR24-2007.pdf.

53 In 94% of schools inspected, pupils, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities, make satisfactory or better progress in their learning; in 60%, progress is good or outstanding (see Figure 6). However, pupils' achievement is inadequate in 6% of all schools, and in secondary schools this figure rises to 9%. These overall percentages mask the fact that the progress of some groups of pupils, such as children in public care, lags far behind that of their peers. The issues surrounding achievement by children and young people who have some of the greatest levels of disadvantage to overcome are discussed in more detail in the thematic section of this report. Almost all pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make at least satisfactory progress in mainstream schools, but progress is good or outstanding only when tasks, resources and support are matched well to their particular needs.

Figure 6: Pupils' achievement in schools inspected since September 2006



Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those schools that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

54 In 95% of nursery schools, pupils make good or outstanding progress in the six areas of learning.¹³ This good start to education is continued in the primary phase, in which pupils' progress is good or outstanding in 60% of schools. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make slightly better progress, relative to their starting points, than other pupils. Pupils' progress is generally good in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science at Key Stages 1 and 2, although achievement in writing is generally weaker than in speaking and listening and in reading. Across the full curriculum, pupils' progress is marginally better at Key Stage 1 than at Key Stage 2. Infant schools generally do better than junior and all-through primary schools, and the overall rate of pupils' progress is better in primary than in secondary schools.

55 In the secondary phase, pupils' progress is good or outstanding in half the schools inspected. It is slightly better overall in schools for pupils aged 11 to 18 years than in schools without sixth forms, and in specialist rather than non-specialist schools. Overall achievement is marginally better at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3, but is best among post-16 students, for whom progress is satisfactory or better in 97% of cases.

56 Pupils make good or outstanding progress in 92% of primary-level special schools inspected compared with 66% of secondary special schools. In all-age special schools, eight out of 10 pupils are making good or outstanding progress. The figures are much worse for pupil referral units, where pupils make good or outstanding progress in only about half of those units inspected. The situation in inadequate units is exacerbated by erratic attendance, weak assessment and the lack of a clear strategy for reintegrating the pupils into mainstream schools.

¹³ The six areas of learning identified in the Foundation Stage are: personal, social and emotional development; communication, language and literacy; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; physical development; and creative development.

Maintained schools continued

Pupils' personal development and well-being

57 In the overwhelming majority of schools, pupils' personal development and well-being are at least satisfactory and in most they are good or outstanding (see Figure 7).

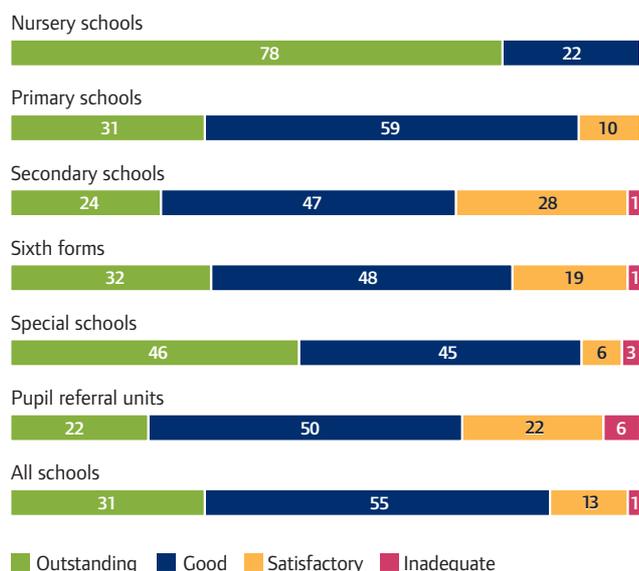
58 Most schools are responding well to the Every Child Matters agenda. Schools ensure that most pupils enjoy their education and are particularly effective in promoting an awareness of healthy lifestyles and personal safety. There are good opportunities to make a positive contribution to the life of the school and the wider community. In secondary schools, skills for the workplace are developed through well organised programmes of work experience. In less successful schools, the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology needed for future success are not acquired quickly enough. In areas of higher deprivation, pupils do least well in relation to achieving future economic well-being. This is because the good progress they often make is from a very low base and is sometimes insufficient to eradicate deep-seated problems in literacy and numeracy.

59 A number of outcomes illustrate successful provision for pupils' personal development. Where it is found, the pupils establish good relationships with trusted adults and feel secure, valued and respected. The school atmosphere is calm and purposeful. Pupils develop the confidence to take responsibility for their own learning and development. Teachers monitor pupils' academic and personal needs, and organise the right level of support or challenge. They also deal quickly and consistently with minor misbehaviour.

60 In schools inspected in 2006/07, attendance was generally judged to be better than that in schools inspected in 2005/06. Attendance is better in the faith schools inspected than in non-denominational schools. The high level of inadequate attendance identified in London schools in 2005/06 is not evident in those inspected in 2006/07, when attendance is satisfactory or better in most cases. However, concerns about pupil absence remain and poor attendance continues to affect learning.

61 Attendance in pupil referral units remains a cause for concern. Unacceptable levels of absence are seen in 20% of units inspected and form a strong contributory factor in the relatively poor achievements of this vulnerable group of pupils. In the most effective units, pupils' attendance improves. They become more engaged in their learning when there is high quality curricular provision, well matched to their particular needs and offering good vocational options, together with an emphasis on raising attainment in literacy and numeracy. Provision which includes helpful individual support increases self-confidence and prepares pupils well for a return to mainstream education.

Figure 7: Pupils' personal development and well-being in schools inspected since September 2006



Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those schools that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

62 Behaviour is good or outstanding in 88% of schools overall. However, the proportion of secondary schools in which behaviour is just satisfactory is 29%, in contrast to 8% for primary schools. Rarely is behaviour inadequate across a school as a whole. At times, however, a few pupils, often in middle or lower sets in secondary schools, disrupt learning for others in ways which require intervention from the teacher and therefore slow the pace of the lesson. Behaviour in 73% of pupil referral units is good or outstanding, but this apparently positive finding must be viewed in the light of the fact that many of those who might misbehave are absent.

63 An Ofsted survey emphasised that the most effective way to develop pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills is through the curriculum and learning (see v, p.99). This survey also found that, where there are insufficient agreed and common approaches to working with the most challenging pupils, attempts to improve their behaviour are undermined. The introduction of vocational courses or enrichment activities, such as those provided in some sports or arts specialist schools, improves behaviour because these learning programmes engage the interest of a broad range of pupils by meeting their needs and aspirations. More information on this survey can be found in the thematic section of this report.

64 Care, guidance and support for pupils are particularly strong in nursery and special schools. In primary and secondary schools, there is very little inadequate provision in this area. In most cases, pupils report that any incidents of racism or bullying are dealt with effectively. In almost all schools, procedures for child protection and health and safety are appropriate. Increasingly, schools are providing academic and pastoral mentors who guide and support pupils well. In less successful schools, a frequent weakness is insufficient attention to academic progress. As a result, pupils become disillusioned with learning and their behaviour deteriorates. The most effective schools work well with parents, carers and other agencies to identify and meet the needs of vulnerable pupils and their families.

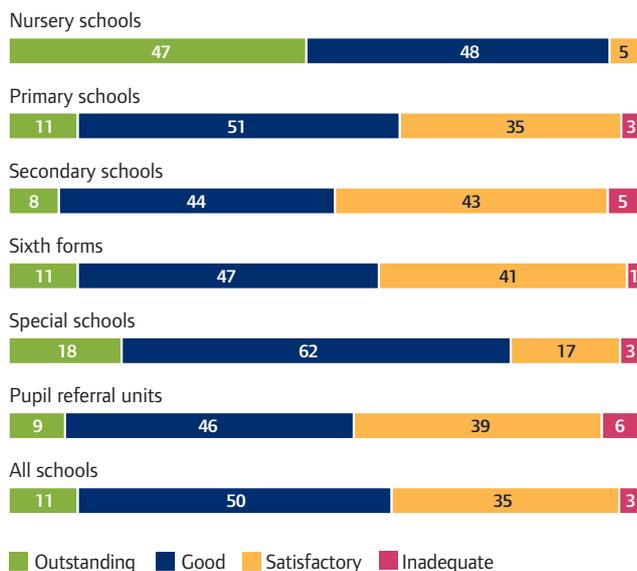


Maintained schools continued

Quality of education

65 Teaching and learning are good or outstanding in 61% of all schools, and in 52% of secondary schools (see Figure 8). They are satisfactory in 35% of all schools, although inadequate in very few. In the most successful lessons, teachers are enthusiastic and knowledgeable, encouraging pupils to be independent learners and to think for themselves. Information and communication technology is often used well to support this work and to engage pupils. Teachers have high expectations and use assessment information about individuals and groups well to provide challenging tasks for all and so ensure that individual progress is rapid and secure. In weaker lessons, tasks are often mundane, providing little scope for thought-provoking work. As a result, behaviour often deteriorates and achievement suffers.

Figure 8: The overall effectiveness of teaching and learning in schools inspected since September 2006



Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.
 Secondary school figures include those schools that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

66 Successful schools use assessment well to track pupils' progress, tailor learning for them and set targets for improvement. In the most effective schools, teachers and pupils often review learning against precise objectives regularly during lessons. Good quality marking is a common characteristic in these schools. Assessment remains, overall, the weakest aspect of teaching. Where assessment is ineffective, teachers do not routinely check pupils' understanding as the lesson progresses. Many teachers still struggle to use the information from assessment to plan work that is well matched to the pupils' needs, and to involve the pupils in assessing their own work.

67 Nursery and special schools provide the greatest proportion of good or outstanding teaching. Teaching is best in the Foundation Stage and for Year 6 pupils in the primary phase; nearly three quarters of lessons inspected for these year groups were good or outstanding. Teaching is weaker for other year groups, and is sometimes characterised by low expectations and tasks which are not well matched to pupils' abilities and learning needs.

68 There is much good teaching in primary schools, but in over a third of those inspected it is no better than satisfactory. In the most effective lessons, teachers enable pupils to transfer their linguistic skills and knowledge between subjects by developing links between reading and writing in English and in other areas of the curriculum. In many of the primary schools inspected, the focus on teaching phonics is helping to raise standards in reading and writing. Often this focus has come from a recent review of the school's strategy for teaching literacy.

69 There are nevertheless some recurrent concerns. Pupils' writing in English, especially that of boys, is frequently a weakness in the primary phase which they carry into Key Stage 3. Often, there is too little emphasis on the skills of drafting, editing and redrafting of writing in primary literacy teaching. In a number of primary schools insufficient emphasis on phonics and weaknesses in the teaching of phonic skills hinder pupils' progress in literacy.

70 Using and applying mathematics are often under-emphasised in primary schools, so that pupils do not achieve a deep understanding of what they have learned. The best practice in mathematics includes feedback from teachers which enables pupils to understand the source of their errors, so that they have clear guidance on how to improve.

71 In other areas of the primary curriculum, weak subject knowledge on the part of some teachers continues to have a negative effect on the provision. This sometimes leads them to rely excessively on mundane tasks that focus too much on knowledge of content and not enough on the understanding that underpins it. It also leads to weaknesses in assessment and poor matching of learning objectives to the pupils' needs. However, there have been some notable improvements in teaching and learning as a result of professional development or specific initiatives. In primary schools, these include better teaching of physical education and personal, social and health education.

72 The overall quality of the primary curriculum has improved; some primary schools, for example, have begun teaching a modern foreign language. In many good or outstanding primary schools, teachers make learning more meaningful by identifying helpful links between different subjects. They use information and communication technology well and take every opportunity to develop literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. Too often, however, these opportunities are not taken and learning is fragmented. Within and between schools, there is an unacceptable range in the quality of provision for subjects other than English and mathematics.

73 A particular characteristic of weaker lessons in primary and secondary schools is the setting of undemanding tasks which provide little opportunity for the pupils to work independently and which sometimes lead to a loss of interest or unsatisfactory behaviour. In outstanding lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects is infectious and they engage pupils' interest through lively presentation and a brisk pace of learning. Accurate assessment is used to identify focused objectives for learning and is the basis for choosing suitably challenging tasks and resources.

74 Ofsted reported in 2002 that more needed to be done to improve continuity in teaching, learning and the use of assessment for pupils transferring from primary to secondary schools, and this remains the case (see iii, p.99). Where practice is best, primary schools ensure that teachers' assessments of Year 6 pupils are passed to their secondary schools in the term before they transfer, identifying those in need of additional support. In other cases, however, detailed records of pupils' progress in primary school are not passed to their new schools. Secondary school staff do not always know about the approaches to teaching and learning in use in their partner primary schools. As a result, teachers in one phase do not know enough about the practice of colleagues in the other to ensure continuity for pupils entering Year 7.

75 The quality of the literacy provision for Year 7 pupils who enter secondary school achieving standards below those expected is too uneven. Where it is weak, it does not ensure the swift improvements in reading and writing which these pupils need in order to make good progress through Key Stage 3. Poor literacy skills are a barrier to achievement for many lower attaining pupils. Poor achievement in literacy and its impact on disadvantaged learners are explored in more detail in the thematic part of this report (p.63).

76 In subjects across the secondary curriculum, some teaching is formulaic and leads to dull lessons that fail to engage pupils. The Secondary National Strategy has had some positive effects in the teaching of English but its impact has been uneven. For example, many teachers appear to have turned their backs on the use of the brisk starter activities that are part of the methodology associated with the strategy so that many lessons still get off to a slow beginning. Often, there is not enough systematic attention to weaknesses in spelling and grammar to improve standards of accuracy in pupils' writing.

Maintained schools continued

77 Where teaching is ineffective, a focus on gaining purely factual knowledge leaves too little time for pupils to apply what they have learned, to carry out research and to develop as creative and independent learners. This inadequate teaching fails to achieve a suitable balance between the necessary acquisition of knowledge and the development of understanding. As a result, the pupils' understanding of what they have learned, as opposed to their ability to recall the basic facts, is often superficial. In mathematics, for example, an ability to describe the rules is not always accompanied by an understanding of the underlying mathematical principles. When pupils do not have the opportunity to engage in relevant, practical enquiry in science, they may lose interest and give up the subject at the first opportunity. In history, the study of relatively few topics in depth means that pupils fail to develop an overview of the past, a sense of chronology and an awareness of the historical context in which events happened.

78 Teachers of personal, social and health education have gained from the wide availability of the continuing professional development certificate in the curriculum area. Training for teachers of citizenship has, as yet, reached only a relatively small number. Although citizenship programmes are developing well in many schools, in a quarter of those sampled the curriculum for the subject was inadequate.

79 This year's survey of modern foreign languages in 30 schools included questions about take-up in Key Stage 4. Well over half the schools visited had a take-up that ranged between 25% and 35%; in the remainder, it was over 60%. Some schools maintain a 'languages for all' policy, but among others few have formal plans to increase take-up of modern foreign languages. A number of Year 9 pupils in the 30 schools reported to inspectors that they would like to continue to study a foreign language at Key Stage 4. However, the overall choice of courses is broader than in the past and other options interest them more.

The greater range of vocational courses available for pupils in Key Stage 4 is a positive aspect of the recent increase in curricular flexibility, but the fall in numbers of pupils studying modern foreign languages is a matter of concern. Ofsted's recent report on history provision identified similar issues about take-up in Key Stage 4, during which only just over 30% of pupils study the subject (see xi, p.99). Again, the report noted that the present GCSE curriculum is not attracting enough Year 9 pupils to choose history once it becomes optional after the end of Key Stage 3.

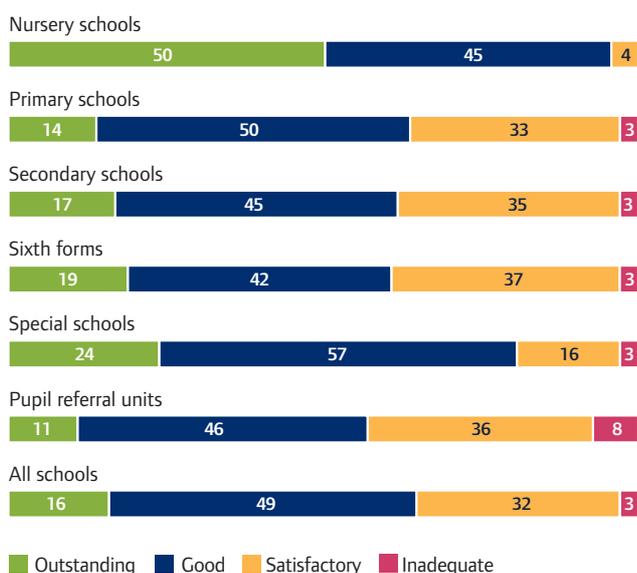
80 Secondary schools offer an increasing number of vocational courses to pupils aged 14 to 19 years, making the curriculum more relevant and motivating for many learners and encouraging them to attend and to learn. However, the curriculum for information and communication technology (ICT) in Key Stage 4 is not improving, and the development of ICT skills to support learning across the curriculum remains too dependent on the expertise of individual subject teachers. Schools in all phases are providing an increasing range of extra-curricular activities, which help to motivate and engage pupils.

81 Teaching and learning are good or outstanding in 80% of special schools. A significant factor is the effective use of assessment information to monitor progress and plan a varied curriculum which is matched to the pupils' needs. Good provision in over half of pupil referral units is characterised by effective teaching, good use of assessment and a strong focus on pupils' individual needs. However, provision is inadequate in 6% of pupil referral units, where assessment is weak and pupils are not given sufficient opportunity to develop the skills needed for life outside the unit.

Leadership and management

82 Leadership and management are at least satisfactory in the overwhelming majority of schools and good or outstanding in 65% (see Figure 9). There is a link between the overall effectiveness of schools of all types and the quality of their leadership and management. This is strongest in primary schools. The role of the headteacher is crucial in establishing a shared commitment to improvement. Outstanding leaders share key responsibilities with senior staff, establish high expectations and engage support for their vision from the staff as a whole. Their self-evaluation is insightful, improvement work is effective and sustained, and management systems ensure that provision is of a consistently high quality. There are, however, some variations between aspects of leadership and management in different types of school.

Figure 9: The effectiveness of leadership and management in schools inspected since September 2006



Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those schools that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.



83 The vast majority of primary schools are led and managed at least satisfactorily. In 62% of secondary schools and 81% of special schools, leadership and management are good or outstanding. In these special schools, close liaison within the school and with external agencies helps to coordinate effective support for each pupil's personal and academic needs. A feature of effective schools, in all phases, is high quality professional development, which helps staff to develop specific knowledge and expertise and to become highly reflective practitioners.

84 In schools judged to be no better than satisfactory, weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation are particular factors. The rate of improvement in these schools is uneven. In some cases, even where whole-school self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate, the work of subject leaders in evaluating and improving performance is too variable in quality. Weak monitoring is imprecise about the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and fails to identify and tackle the reasons why some learners underachieve. School self-evaluation is too often based on insecure evidence, and development plans do not always provide a clear strategic direction for improvement. Lack of consistency, for example in subject leadership, the rigour of self-evaluation and the quality of improvement planning, hampers the attempts of such schools to raise standards.

Maintained schools continued

85 More schools are found by inspectors to be good or outstanding in their self-evaluation and capacity to improve than in their overall effectiveness. This often reflects a situation in which leaders and managers have accurately evaluated their strengths and weaknesses and have taken actions that have brought about improvements in the provision. These improvements have not yet had their full impact on the pupils' achievement.

86 Inspection evidence over the last 10 years shows an improving trend in the quality of schools' self-evaluation in both phases of education. In 2006/07, self-evaluation is good or outstanding in 66% of primary schools inspected and in 64% of secondary schools. In 1996/97, self-evaluation was good or better in 32% of primary and 31% of secondary schools. Even allowing for the changes in the inspection framework over this period, the figures suggest that the improvement has been significant. In 2006, Ofsted published a survey of best practice in self-evaluation (see ii, p.99). The survey highlighted the importance in effective schools of rigorous self-evaluation as the essential basis of measures to improve provision and achievement. The quality of a school's self-evaluation remains a key element in the judgement that inspectors make about its capacity to improve.

87 In 57% of the pupil referral units inspected, leadership and management are at least good, but they are outstanding in a very small minority. Leadership and management are inadequate in 8% of pupil referral units inspected this year. These units often do not have sufficient capacity to improve because they have not established criteria to evaluate their effectiveness, and there is no formal monitoring of the quality of provision or its impact on outcomes for pupils. Local authorities retain oversight and significant resources for improvement of pupil referral units in their areas and are therefore accountable for their effectiveness.

88 Governing bodies discharge their duties well in the majority of schools. Where they are most effective, they play a full strategic role in guiding and supporting the school's work and providing challenges for further improvement. In schools which are inadequate, governing bodies do not monitor sufficiently well to know the school's strengths and weaknesses, and to be able to hold the leaders to account for its overall effectiveness.

Academies

89 Academies are all-ability schools, most of which are located in disadvantaged areas. One of their aims is to end a history of underachievement where this has seemed an intractable problem. They either replace schools which are facing challenging circumstances or are opened where an additional school is needed.

90 The inspections of eight academies during 2006/07 confirm a rising trend in their overall effectiveness. One of the academies is outstanding, one is good and six are satisfactory. None is inadequate. Strong and effective leadership in most academies has had a positive impact on pupils' progress and achievement, often from a low base. Pupils' personal development and well-being are particular strengths in most academies, reflecting their success in establishing a positive climate for learning. Nevertheless, developing a consistently high quality of teaching and learning remains a challenge, particularly in the most difficult areas, and several academies have struggled to establish viable sixth form provision.

Fresh Start schools

91 Fresh Start is an approach to solving the problems of schools which cause concern. It involves replacing a school which has particularly complex and enduring difficulties with a new school, which is opened on the same site as its predecessor. Since 1998, 51 Fresh Start schools have been opened. These schools normally have a full inspection two years after opening and are then no longer designated as Fresh Start. The very large majority are now providing at least a satisfactory standard of education. Of the seven schools still in the Fresh Start category in 2006/07, six were making satisfactory or better progress at the time of their most recent monitoring inspections.

Schools causing concern

92 Since the introduction of the current school inspection arrangements in September 2005, schools with overall effectiveness which is inadequate have been placed in one of two categories: special measures or notice to improve. In 2006/07, as in previous years, the main reasons for schools being judged inadequate overall were inadequate achievement by the pupils, inadequate teaching and learning, and ineffective leadership and management. Schools removed from categories of concern during 2006/07 made progress in improving those aspects of their provision.

93 In 2006/07, the proportion of schools inspected in which overall effectiveness was inadequate, at 6%, was lower than in 2005/06, when 8% of inspections resulted in schools being placed in a category of concern. However, over 2,000 more schools were inspected this year and more schools were placed in special measures or given a notice to improve than were removed from these categories. Consequently, the total number of schools in special measures, or with a notice to improve, increased from 520 in 2005/06 to 552 by the end of 2006/07.

94 Most schools placed in the special measures category are removed from it in the second year. Fewer schools were removed from special measures in 2006/07 than in 2005/06, mainly because fewer had been placed in the category in 2004/05 than in 2003/04. Of 164 schools made subject to special measures during 2005/06, 78 had improved sufficiently to be removed from the category in the course of the next academic year, 2006/07. Of these, 72 had improved their overall effectiveness to at least satisfactory and 16 of these were good. The remaining six schools, while no longer subject to special measures, were given a notice to improve.

95 During 2006/07, 276 schools which had been given a notice to improve in 2005/06 were reinspected, a year after being placed in the category. On reinspection, 92% had made sufficient progress to be judged at least satisfactory overall, and 13% of these were then judged to be good schools. A very small minority (5%) of the reinspected schools continued to require a notice to improve, and 3% were made subject to special measures because they had not made the necessary improvements.

96 During 2006/07, Ofsted expanded its programme of monitoring visits to schools causing concern. Those subject to special measures continued to receive monitoring inspections, normally each term, until removed from the category of concern. All schools given a notice to improve now receive monitoring visits approximately six to eight months after the inspection that placed them in the category.

97 Monitoring visits to a small proportion of schools with overall effectiveness judged satisfactory, but with some areas of underperformance, were trialled successfully in the autumn term 2006 and spring term 2007. These visits have become a regular element of inspection since 1 April 2007. The schools visited included all those in which the pupils' behaviour had been judged inadequate. Approximately nine out of 10 of these schools which were satisfactory overall but had some areas of weakness were judged to be making satisfactory or better progress.

98 Improvement in the processes of monitoring and self-evaluation was a key factor in the recovery of schools causing concern, especially those subject to special measures, enabling them to target areas of weakness more precisely. The strengthening of leadership was also an important element in improvement. Nearly half of the schools subject to special measures appointed a new headteacher. They also improved governance and subject leadership. In a relatively small number of cases, governing bodies have been replaced by interim executive boards; the most recent figures from the Department for Children, Schools and Families show 25 schools with such boards. During 2006/07, these were successful in bringing coherence to the schools' work. They acted as a catalyst for school improvement by providing clear strategic direction and robust challenge.

Parental complaints

Introduction

99 Her Majesty's Chief Inspector received new powers under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to investigate complaints about schools by parents, providing that they are 'qualifying complaints' relevant to Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's remit.¹⁴ The powers, which took effect on 27 April 2007, allow Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to require information from a school and, where appropriate, the local authority. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector may also require a school to give notice of, and hold, a meeting for parents on school premises. Where Ofsted reports the outcome of an investigation, the school may be required to distribute it to parents. Ofsted investigates only written complaints but, in line with its user focus, it is committed to providing help and assistance for parents making enquiries through its helpdesk.

100 Guidance for parents has been published which explains: who can complain to Ofsted about schools; the kinds of complaints to which it can respond; when Ofsted will advise parents to contact someone else about their concerns; and the action that parents can expect Ofsted to take. Parents will normally be expected to have followed local procedures before making a complaint to Ofsted.

101 Ofsted undertook an extensive consultation exercise on its plans for responding to parents' concerns and for using Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's new powers. The responses gathered included those from an online survey and from national organisations at face-to-face meetings and in writing. A research organisation was engaged to conduct focus groups and in-depth individual interviews to explore the views of a representative sample of parents, including those from groups whose circumstances make them harder to reach, for example those for whom English is an additional language. The findings of both the consultation and the research were broadly consistent, providing a positive endorsement of Ofsted's plans and useful steers for refining them. Nevertheless, Ofsted still receives a high volume of complaints that are outside its remit, suggesting that more needs to be done to help parents and others understand where else they might go for responses and redress.

Main findings

102 Since 27 April 2007 when Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's powers took effect, Ofsted has received 947 enquiries, by telephone or email.¹⁵ Ofsted's customer service advisers have offered assistance and advice to those who contacted them.

103 Over the same period, Ofsted has also received 374 written complaints. The 263 initially processed fully show:

- four were referred to Ofsted's safeguarding teams
- 52 were qualifying complaints from registered parents of registered pupils (where Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's new powers were available)
- 16 were qualifying complaints where Her Majesty's Chief Inspector's new powers were not available (for example, anonymous complaints)
- 191 were non-qualifying complaints (such as those outside Ofsted's remit).

104 Ofsted's aim is to provide a good service for parents. Where a written complaint does not qualify for further consideration by Ofsted, parents are directed to another appropriate contact point. This may be another body, a headteacher, a board of governors or the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

105 Following consideration of a written qualifying complaint where no further action is deemed appropriate, the complaint may be retained for the information of the lead inspector when the school is next inspected. To date, Ofsted has retained 38 complaints.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector received new powers under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to investigate complaints about schools by parents.

Quality and standards

Independent schools



Introduction

106 All independent schools in England must meet the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended 17 January 2005. They are inspected under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, amended 2005.

107 Ofsted continues to monitor the quality of inspections and reports produced by the Independent Schools Inspectorate and these are of good quality. This year, a new inspectorate, the Schools Inspection Service (SIS), has been approved to inspect Christian Brethren schools that are members of the Focus Learning Trust. Ofsted has monitored all inspections and reports produced by the SIS and found them to be good.

108 Between September 2006 and July 2007, Ofsted carried out 357 inspections of non-association independent schools.¹⁶ This number included: schools catering wholly or mainly for pupils with a statement of special educational need; independent pupil referral units; tutorial colleges; faith, Steiner and stage schools; and children's homes which provide education. Of these schools, 73 were newly registered in the previous academic year.

Effectiveness and improvement

109 This year, 13% of the schools inspected met all the regulatory requirements. Almost three quarters (72%) of them met 90% or more of the regulations.¹⁷ The equivalent figure for last year was 68% and is part of a steadily improving picture since the Education Act 2002 came into force in September 2003.

110 Inspection findings demonstrate that the vast majority of independent schools are getting the basics right. Almost all of them have a curriculum which develops pupils' skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy, and enables them to make progress. Pupils are well supervised and are encouraged to behave responsibly and to show initiative. They are enabled to develop self-confidence, taught to distinguish clearly between right and wrong, and encouraged to make a positive contribution to community life. All of the schools that accept nursery pupils provide a programme of activities which is appropriate to their needs. Almost all schools with boarding or residential provision meet the National Minimum Standards. Almost all schools which accept post-16 students provide appropriate study programmes.

¹⁶ Ofsted inspects all independent schools that are not members of associations affiliated to the Independent Schools Council or the Focus Learning Trust. These schools are inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) or the Schools Inspection Service (SIS), respectively.

¹⁷ Inspectors of independent schools are required to make judgements about whether the school meets the seven standards for registration, as set out in the regulations, in relation to: the quality of education provided by the school; the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils; the welfare, health and safety of the pupils; the suitability of proprietor and staff; the school's premises and accommodation; the provision of information for parents, carers and others; and the procedures for handling complaints.

Independent schools continued

111 However, some important areas of concern remain. Almost 40% of all schools inspected this year did not have sufficiently robust policies and procedures to safeguard and promote the welfare of their pupils. Although these schools had child protection policies, these lacked sufficient detail, and staff had not received up to date training. In 28% of the schools inspected, there were flaws in systems for checking the suitability of staff to work with children, where managers had not checked the references or medical fitness of their staff. Sixteen per cent of schools had not checked with the Criminal Records Bureau the suitability of all staff appointed since 2003 to work with children. These tend to be isolated cases, involving volunteer helpers or part-time and visiting staff, for example coaches or specialist teachers. This is a matter of serious concern. In 31% of cases, schools did not have appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, and 36% of schools did not fulfil their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act 2002.¹⁸

112 Particular issues arose in children's homes which offer education to children in public care. Although these establishments generally had appropriate safeguarding arrangements, 39% did not have adequate classroom resources and 34% did not provide a curriculum underpinned by detailed schemes of work. This is important as they often take vulnerable young people at short notice and need to settle them quickly and provide a learning programme suited to their needs.

113 Only 6% of schools met fewer than 70% of the regulations. Most of them had weaknesses in policies and procedures rather than in the quality of teaching, although the latter was a feature of the poorest schools. Schools are required to resolve regulatory failures. At the request of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), Ofsted monitors the progress of those schools where inspectors have found serious weaknesses. This year, progress monitoring visits were made to 46 schools. Six of these have now closed. Thirteen had not made satisfactory progress towards meeting regulations; these schools are facing action from the DCSF. Effective monitoring by Ofsted in partnership with the DCSF is securing improvement for pupils.

114 In addition to the inspections, Ofsted assessed applications to register from 174 prospective schools, the vast majority of which were special schools or children's homes. Of these, 42 are now registered schools which are open and accepting pupils. These schools will be inspected next year. Half of the remaining number have been recommended for, and are in the process of, registration. The rest were not good enough for registration to be recommended.



Quality and standards

Further education colleges



Introduction

115 Students in the further education sector represent the broadest cross-section of participants, from those with learning difficulties or disabilities, for whom specialist and individual support is needed, to those following courses leading to professional qualifications and university entrance. In addition to the richness and breadth of their provision, further education colleges, together with the adult learning sector, form a vital element in the drive to raise the level of skills and qualifications among the working population and to ensure that those seeking employment are equipped to do so. In December 2006, the final report of the Leitch Review of Skills in England drew attention to the urgency of this project, and to the threats to our national competitiveness if our skills levels fail to keep pace with those of competitor economies.¹⁹ The evidence of inspection in 2006/07 indicates that colleges are rising to the challenges identified by the Leitch Review and are focusing increasingly on improving their responsiveness to employer demands.

116 Ofsted has continued to vary its approach to the inspection of individual colleges on the basis of their performance at their most recent inspections.

Those colleges performing well when previously inspected, and which continue to maintain high standards, receive 'light touch' inspections. As part of an even more proportionate approach, a small sample of high performing colleges was included in a pilot project involving inspections which lasted only one or two days. By contrast, colleges judged to be satisfactory or inadequate at their previous inspections are allocated proportionately greater inspection resources. Outstanding and good colleges will not be visited between inspections provided that high standards are maintained. 'Light touch' inspections for good colleges will continue. A more intensive approach to inspection will continue to be used for colleges judged to be satisfactory or inadequate.

117 This section draws on the findings from all further education inspections undertaken in the academic year 2006/07. Between September 2006 and June 2007, inspections were carried out in 74 general further education or tertiary colleges, 16 sixth form colleges, 16 independent specialist colleges and 10 other specialist further education colleges. All colleges, including those inspected, receive annual assessment visits to monitor their progress.

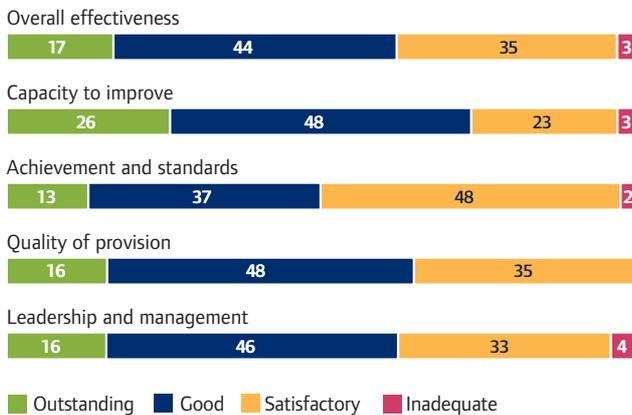
¹⁹ *Prosperity for all in the global economy: world class skills: final report of the Leitch review of skills* (ISBN: 0-11-840486-5), HMSO, 2006.

Further education colleges continued

Overall effectiveness

118 Inspections in 2006/07 revealed continuing improvement in the sector. Of 100 colleges inspected, excluding the 16 independent specialist colleges, 17 are outstanding and 44 are good in their overall effectiveness (see Figure 10). About 2% of the annual assessment visits resulted in a recommendation that inspection should be brought forward. Of the 31 work-based learning areas reinspected across 18 colleges during annual assessment visits, 29 were found to be satisfactory or better at reinspection.

Figure 10: Overview of colleges (excluding independent specialist colleges) inspected since September 2006



Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

119 Nevertheless, the proportion of colleges that are satisfactory rather than good or outstanding in their overall effectiveness is still too high. Further, almost three quarters of colleges currently in this category were also judged satisfactory at their last inspection and are therefore not improving. More positively, in all but one of the colleges judged satisfactory overall, no whole-college aspects were graded inadequate. Two thirds of satisfactory colleges were also judged to have only satisfactory capacity to improve. Insufficiently rigorous self-assessment and quality assurance procedures are the most common barriers to improvement in these colleges. Too little use of data and a failure to set sufficiently challenging targets are also frequently occurring weaknesses.

120 All colleges of further education which were inadequate at their previous inspections improved enough to be judged satisfactory on reinspection. Four colleges of further education which were previously categorised as satisfactory or good are now inadequate. Four independent specialist colleges previously judged to be inadequate were found to be inadequate on reinspection. A fifth independent specialist college previously categorised as satisfactory was also found to be inadequate.

121 Sixth form colleges continue to be effective institutions. All of those inspected in 2006/07 are good or outstanding. The short inspections carried out as a pilot project confirmed that those sixth form colleges previously categorised as outstanding have maintained this high performance.



In addition to the richness and breadth of their provision, further education colleges, together with the adult learning sector, form a vital element in the drive to raise the level of skills and qualifications among the working population.



Quality and standards

122 Overall success rates in the sector have increased on both long and short courses. Pass rates and retention have improved at broadly the same rate and improvements are evident across all types of college and all main levels of learning. The management of work-based learning in further education colleges, which historically has been weak, has improved and success rates have increased significantly in all main subject areas. However, only just over a half of learners achieve complete success in advanced apprenticeships and apprenticeships, and this remains an area for further improvement in many colleges.

123 Nearly all colleges inspected in 2006/07 have at least satisfactory levels of learner achievement and standards. In half of colleges, this aspect is good or outstanding. In the best colleges, development of practical and employability skills is particularly effective, with good progression to higher level courses and employment. The good progress made by learners in these colleges is linked closely to a culture of high expectations of success. In colleges where achievement is satisfactory, insufficient challenges to learners, together with poor attendance and punctuality, are barriers to good or outstanding progress.

124 The quality of provision in all colleges inspected is at least satisfactory. In 64%, it is good or outstanding. In many colleges, effective observation of teaching and learning has been established, leading to improvements in learners' success and progress. In those colleges failing to secure good or outstanding outcomes, the proportion of good or outstanding teaching is too low and lesson observation is not rigorous enough.

125 Colleges are becoming increasingly responsive to community and employer needs. Links with industry and professional organisations are significant strengths in many of the colleges inspected. Courses for learners aged 14 to 16, often run in partnership with schools, are providing effective and successful opportunities for progression and employment. Work experience is frequently purposeful and readily available, but in a significant minority of cases, colleges do not provide sufficient, or flexible, opportunities for work-related learning.

126 The high quality of guidance and support for learners is a significant strength in many colleges inspected. Good additional learning support and strong pastoral services contribute to improved success rates. However, in some colleges, learners' progress is not monitored efficiently and there are not enough specific targets for improvement.

127 The proportion of colleges in which leadership and management are inadequate is lower this year than previously. Leadership and management are inadequate in 4% of colleges inspected in 2006/07, compared with 11% of those inspected in 2005/06. There are clear links between the inspection grades for leadership and management and for overall effectiveness. In good and outstanding colleges, clear strategic vision and challenging self-assessment have contributed significantly to the raising of standards. In these effective colleges, self-assessment focuses appropriately on high quality outcomes for learners. Weaker self-assessment and poor use of data and target setting characterise those colleges which are not improving quickly enough. The evaluation of teaching and learning is often too superficial and fails to analyse the strengths and weaknesses in sufficient detail.

Annual assessment visits and outcomes

128 All colleges, including sixth form colleges, are currently subject to a one-day annual assessment visit in order to monitor progress and help determine the timing of the next inspection. In the vast majority of cases, the annual assessment visit has resulted in a recommendation that the next inspection should take place within the timescale originally planned and with the same level of resources. A very small minority of visits resulted in a judgement that the college's self-assessment was not appropriately evaluative or that its judgements were inconsistent with the sample of evidence seen. From September 2007, the best performing colleges will no longer be visited annually. Instead, performance data, together with other evidence, will be analysed to judge whether a given college's high performance is being maintained.

Independent specialist colleges

129 During 2006/07, 16 independent specialist colleges were inspected. Independent specialist colleges mainly provide education for young people with learning or other disabilities and may have as few as two students on roll or as many as 240. During the same period, five colleges were judged to be good or outstanding overall and a further five were found to be inadequate; three of these were new to the sector and had been open only for a short while. The colleges judged inadequate did not, at the time of their inspections, have appropriate systems to meet their learners' needs adequately. The Quality Improvement Agency, which works to improve provision in colleges and adult learning, makes available a quality improvement adviser to each inadequate college.

130 The quality of leadership and management remains too variable in this sector. Leadership and management are integral to success and many of the colleges do not have sufficient capacity to achieve what is expected. In more successful colleges, where leadership and management are good, self-assessment is rigorous and the curriculum is coherent and tailored appropriately to the needs of individual learners. Managers are experienced and promote a culture of continuous improvement, based on effective assessment of existing strengths and areas for development.

131 In the less successful colleges, quality improvement systems are weak and do not result in effective planning to bring about change. Self-assessment is not focused sufficiently on learners, and the changes made are ineffective in bringing about the required improvements in the quality of learning. In the past, the quality of external support on offer for independent specialist colleges has been too variable. The Quality Improvement Agency, which works in partnership with the Learning and Skills Council, has now become involved with a small number of these colleges, but it is too soon to judge the effects of its contribution to their work.

Colleges are becoming increasingly responsive to community and employer needs. Links with industry and professional organisations are significant strengths in many of the colleges inspected.



Adult learning and skills

Introduction

132 Adult learning touches the lives of a significant proportion of the population. The sector represents a substantial investment in delivering the Government's strategy for securing a better trained and more competitive workforce, promoting both inclusiveness and lifelong learning. The costs of adult learning programmes are met, in part, by government funding, but also by employers through training their own workforces, and by individuals seeking to improve their skills and qualifications. The adult skills sector is increasingly mature, engaging successfully with employers and widening opportunities for learners.²⁰

133 The adult learning sector is characterised by diversity, flexibility and a personalised approach to learning to meet individual, social and economic needs. The sector includes work-based learning, adult and community learning, welfare to work provision funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, learning and skills in the judicial services, nextstep (information, advice and guidance for adults) and learndirect. Work-based learning is by far the largest area in terms of the provider base and the number of inspections undertaken. In judicial services, adult and community learning, Department for Work and Pensions provision and learndirect, the first inspection cycle was completed at the end of 2005/06. Changes to inspection methodology were introduced, incorporating a proportionate approach based upon assessment of risk in each case.

134 During the academic year 2006/07, 77 providers who were found inadequate at their previous inspections were inspected again. Overall, the sector continues to improve, with all but four of these 77 providers awarded satisfactory or better overall grades on reinspection. Between April and August 2007, 68 quality monitoring visits took place and these proved effective in checking the providers' progress towards remedying the weaknesses identified at inspection. However, there is little evidence yet that these providers are bringing about the step-change in quality needed to have the marked impact on learners' success rates that characterises good or outstanding provision. Some significant and continuing challenges remain.

135 Inspections of adult learning prior to the end of March 2007 were carried out by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, now part of the new Ofsted.

Work-based learning

136 In the past year, there have been 123 inspections of work-based learning. Over half of the 40,000 learners based with these providers are on apprenticeship programmes. The improving trend in work-based learning continues, with only 7% of providers judged to be inadequate for overall effectiveness compared with 12% in 2005/06. Following a three-year pilot scheme, Train to Gain was launched in September 2006. This is an initiative which is designed to meet the skills needs of employers by providing tailored advice and brokering, and offering free training for employees without a level 2 qualification.²¹

137 Success rates have improved among apprentices and those undertaking National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Despite the upward trend, success rates among apprentices remain far too low, with national averages of 60% for apprentices and 54% for advanced apprentices. Success rates are below 50% in some sector subject areas, including leisure, retail and care (in the year to April 2007).

138 Train to Gain learners improved in their work skills, productivity, motivation and self-esteem. The programme represents the first opportunity many of them have had to gain a nationally recognised qualification. Qualification success rates are high, at over 75% in many cases.

139 Work-based learning courses are wide-ranging and delivered flexibly. Providers take into account shift patterns and job demands when planning learning programmes. Across all subject areas in the sector, learners gain confidence and develop a range of useful, job-related skills. However, too often, this is as a result of informal and unplanned coaching rather than well structured on-the-job learning. Between July 2006 and June 2007, 48% of off-the-job learning sessions inspected were good or better, while 7% were inadequate.

140 Areas for improvement vary between sector subject areas, but there are some common themes. Arrangements for initial assessment are generally adequate. However, the quality and availability of literacy, numeracy and language support are poor. In several areas, including construction, planning and the built environment, engineering and manufacturing technologies, and hairdressing and beauty therapy, learners do not have enough access to timely, work-based assessment. In some occupations, such as the social care provision in health, public services and care, and hospitality, there are not enough opportunities for learners to progress from a level 2 to a level 3 qualification.

141 Train to Gain has proved successful in engaging employers. However, there has not been sufficient analysis of the skills which employers need, nor has enough information been gathered on existing staff skills, future business needs or the potential for accrediting prior learning.

142 Leadership and management are satisfactory or better in the very large majority of work-based learning providers. They are inadequate in only 7% of cases, but too many (15%) have unsatisfactory quality improvement arrangements. The management of work-based learning in further education colleges, which historically has been weak, has improved.

Adult and community learning

143 Attracting some 1.7 million learners, adult and community learning provides learning opportunities for a broad cross-section of the community. It features a wide range of provider types, including local authorities, external institutions, colleges, adult learning residential colleges and the voluntary sector. Its two main Learning and Skills Council funding streams are for 19-plus further education provision and personal and community development learning. Providers may also receive separate funding for family learning, neighbourhood learning in deprived communities and provision below level 2 such as First Steps. Some providers access additional funding, such as the European Social Fund (ESF). Adult and community learning provision is developmental in nature, responsive to learner demand, and linked closely to national and local priorities.

144 Since July 2006, there have been 55 overall inspection judgements in the adult and community learning sector. Of these, 23 were good or outstanding for overall effectiveness compared with only 14 in 2005/06. The number of inadequate providers has fallen from 11 in 2005/06 to three in 2006/07.

145 Providers focus increasingly on offering learning opportunities for those most in need; they are developing wide networks to promote learning. Some partnerships are successful in attracting additional external funding, which they use well to extend provision, for example by building new premises for learners with disabilities. Many providers work effectively with a very diverse range of learners, including people with learning difficulties or disabilities, individuals with mental health problems, Travellers, migrant workers and those misusing substances.

146 By participation in adult and community learning, learners are becoming more effectively involved in improving their communities. They are better prepared to contribute to the economy. Learners take pride in their newly developed abilities and are gaining in confidence and self-esteem. Nevertheless, too many providers offering accredited qualifications, especially in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages, have low success rates.

By participation in adult and community learning, learners are becoming more effectively involved in improving their communities.

Adult learning and skills continued



147 Family learning successfully engages parents in taking an active role in their children's education. Of the family learning provision inspected, 60% is good or better. However, although particularly successful in widening participation and developing learners' personal and social skills, family learning programmes do not focus enough on meeting learners' individual needs.

148 In adult and community learning, much of the teaching is no better than satisfactory and, in most subject areas, learning is not matched sufficiently with what the learner needs to know. In the better classes, learners are set challenging individual goals, and tutors use imaginative ways of charting their progress. Too often, however, learners' targets are too general or too easily achieved. Their starting points are not well established and progress is not monitored thoroughly enough.

149 Managers do not place sufficient emphasis on improving the quality of teaching. Many of their observations of teaching and learning fail to evaluate the provision rigorously enough. However, providers are improving their collection and analysis of data about learners' progress. They are using the information effectively to target specific groups of learners and to evaluate their performance. Providers' monitoring of the work of subcontractors, which was poor in the past, has improved.

Learning and skills in prisons

150 Under the new inspection arrangements, introduced in autumn 2006, inspectors report on three strands: personal and social development; employability and vocational training; and literacy, numeracy and teaching English as a second or additional language.

151 Pass rates in literacy and numeracy continue to improve. Resettlement programmes, designed to help offenders prepare for their release, are well planned but often occur too late in the offenders' sentences to prepare them thoroughly for a full life in the community.

152 In many prisons there is little teaching and learning that is good or outstanding. The better sessions place an appropriate emphasis on work and develop learners' skills to the standard expected by industry. An increasing number of prisons develop good local links with employers to improve learners' job opportunities at the end of their sentences.

153 The range of provision in most prisons is no better than satisfactory, but it includes more employability skills training than has been seen in previous years. In a few prisons, the limited range of programmes does not meet the needs of individual learners or potential employers. Information, advice and guidance are used effectively to raise awareness of learning and skills among offenders, but instructors do not make sufficient effort to engage those offenders who initially refuse the opportunity for training.

154 Learners are well supported, especially by staff on prison wings. However, there is insufficient linking of initial assessment, the preparation of individual learning plans and sentence planning. Learning goals are not recorded clearly or systematically enough.

155 In prisons which provide the best learning, managers, contractors and staff work well together, sharing information effectively. However, there is a lack of clarity about who has overall responsibility for learning and skills. The use of information by managers is often poor, particularly in relation to learners' participation, progress and achievement. There is insufficient sharing of information between providers of learning and prisons.

New Deal and Employment Zones

156 In July 2006, the Department for Work and Pensions changed its contracting arrangements for the New Deal initiative, appointing a prime contractor to manage New Deal programmes over wide geographical areas. Contracts are therefore very new and providers' systems and procedures have only recently been established. Inspections of the new provision began in January 2007. Of the eight New Deal providers inspected, only two were judged good overall, three were satisfactory and three were inadequate. One Employment Zone was also inspected; it was judged to be good.

157 Many of the people accessing employability programmes are particularly hard to help. Many are participating for the second or third time, after failing to get, or stay in, a job. The proportion of participants on New Deal programmes who progressed to employment was poor at around 20%. Some providers have started to improve their job outcome rates, but in the main they have still failed to achieve their contractual targets. Employment

Zones performed better, achieving job outcomes that averaged 60%. Current contractual arrangements do not require evidence of the sustainability of job outcomes beyond 12 months. Monitoring sustainability over a longer period would be a crucial indicator in judging the long term impact of these programmes.

158 The more successful programmes are particularly flexible. Carefully designed to meet participants' needs, they offer the right blend of high quality vocational training, structured support and jobsearch activities. Programmes are reviewed and adjusted regularly as participants make progress.

159 The better providers have high aspirations for participants. Staff are highly motivated, have clear targets and use appropriate resources to help participants into work. Staff are positive and encouraging, but challenge participants' unrealistic expectations where necessary. Where subcontractors' provision is weaker, staff do not plan individualised learning programmes or set clear targets.

160 Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. However, the quality improvement arrangements of providers are new and not thorough enough. The monitoring of subcontractors' interactions with participants is poorly planned. Some providers are unsure how to resolve the underperformance of subcontractors.

Workstep

161 Of the 23 Workstep providers inspected in 2006/07, 21 were satisfactory or better in their overall effectiveness; two were inadequate.

162 Participants are set challenging targets and talk confidently about the progress they are making and their future aspirations. There is a strong emphasis on progression for all participants, whether to employment or with regard to tasks and responsibilities in their current work environment. With most providers, over half the participants make progress towards achieving unsupported employment.

Adult learning and skills continued

163 Many providers work well with employers to improve their understanding of disability in the workplace, explaining how simple adaptations and changes in work practices open up employment possibilities to people with disabilities. The best providers make very effective use of their supported business to prepare participants for work by offering them experience in a range of occupations. However, in many cases, participants' needs for work-related support with literacy and numeracy are not met.

164 Overall, leadership and management are no better than satisfactory. Workstep providers demonstrate an understanding of the role of quality improvement in improving participants' experience and supporting their progress. Despite this positive trend, almost a quarter of providers were judged to have inadequate quality improvement arrangements, with much work still to do.

Nextstep

165 Of the 13 nextstep providers inspected, seven were judged to be satisfactory for overall effectiveness, four were good and two were inadequate. Quality improvement was inadequate in five providers. Key weaknesses included over-reliance on subcontractors' quality improvement systems and poor arrangements for checking on the action plans of learners (referred to as 'clients').

166 Overall, the rate of clients who enter learning or employment following a nextstep intervention is satisfactory and exceeds the Learning and Skills Council's target of 45%. The most successful providers recognise the key aim of the nextstep service in supporting clients to enter learning or employment. They set themselves and their subcontractors challenging targets and systematically follow up clients.

167 Providers continue to provide a service which is rightly focused on the needs of clients. Most advice sessions are satisfactory or better. In the better sessions, advisers use their skills and local knowledge effectively to make good progress with clients. They establish clients' aims and individual requirements quickly, set out clear alternative courses of action, provide detailed and appropriate information about future action and identify other relevant sources of support. Advisers take satisfactory steps to identify clients' literacy, numeracy and language support needs.

168 In a minority of cases, the quality of advice sessions is inadequate. In these sessions, insufficient emphasis is placed on learning and employment outcomes. Advisers do not acquaint themselves sufficiently with clients' aspirations or circumstances, or provide them with information about the range of opportunities available. The quality of action plans for these clients is poor and, occasionally, the action plan is completed after the advice session and not shared with the client. A significant majority of providers offer well located and accessible provision in a variety of settings. Most venues have satisfactory facilities for group and individual meetings.

169 Providers continue to use partnerships effectively to widen participation. They select subcontractors carefully, taking into account the needs of priority groups and of the local labour market. There are some good examples of provision for clients who have specific barriers to participation. Providers manage well the delicate balance between focusing on clients without a level 2 qualification, ensuring adequate geographical coverage and responding to local priorities.

170 Providers' strategic planning is predominantly satisfactory. Overall, the nextstep service in 2006/07 rightly focused more on directing clients towards learning or employment than on providing information and advice as an end in itself. The management of data and the monitoring of subcontractors' performance are generally effective.

171 Quality improvement remains a significant area of weakness. In far too many cases, contractors' approaches to improving quality are poorly planned and initiatives are implemented too slowly. They rely too heavily on subcontractors' own quality assurance systems without checking that these are fit for purpose. Systems for monitoring the quality of advice sessions and action plans are frequently ineffective. However, in most cases, the self-assessment process leads to a thorough and sufficiently evaluative report. As this is the first cycle of inspections in this area, it is too early to say what the impact of self-assessment will be on the quality of the provision.

Learndirect

172 The 17 learndirect centres inspected offer mainly literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology courses. Although programmes are available to all learners, priority is given to those who do not have a level 2 qualification and, in particular, people with literacy and numeracy skills below level 1. Of the 17 centres inspected, 15 were satisfactory or better.

173 Learndirect's literacy and numeracy programmes are successful in improving learners' confidence, employability and life chances. Learners' achievement of qualifications (75% or more in most centres) is good, and success rates for national literacy and numeracy tests are high. Very few learners withdraw before the end of their courses, and a large majority of them progress to further courses.

174 On learndirect information and communication technology programmes, learners usually develop good skills and gain confidence in basic computer applications. However, all of the five centres where this provision was graded by inspectors have poor success rates. This is because many learners leave courses early: some move on to literacy and numeracy courses, and others choose not to take the final examination, for example in computer literacy and information technology or a module of the European Computer Driving Licence.

175 Learners are highly motivated by the wide range of short courses on offer and value opportunities to gain nationally recognised qualifications. Most centres take good account of local business needs. In the best cases, literacy and numeracy courses are successfully integrated with specific vocational programmes, such as lift truck training and customer care.

176 Tutors provide good initial information and advice to help learners select the right course. Where appropriate, tutors refer learners with significant learning needs to alternative provision. This guidance is particularly important to those who have been away from learning or employment for some time. Some centres provide valuable additional support on issues such as financial management, housing and dealing with substance misuse. In most cases, the quality of specialist literacy and numeracy support is good. Tutors respond flexibly to learners' changing needs and circumstances.

177 The planning and recording of learning are weak. Initial and diagnostic assessment is used well by most learndirect centres to place learners on the right course, but their existing skills and knowledge are not taken into account sufficiently when planning individual sessions. Records of learning sessions are often poor, and learners are unable to track their own progress easily.

178 Learndirect providers place a high priority on widening participation. Successful initiatives are implemented to engage learners from deprived communities and under-represented groups. The formation of useful local partnerships enables learndirect provision to be offered in varied and accessible locations.

179 There is an effective quality monitoring framework for learning centres, but this is not always well understood or implemented. Learning centres do not manage the self-assessment process well and many of their self-assessment reports are poor. Quality improvement arrangements are better in further education colleges and other large providers. They are particularly weak at two of the 11 centres inspected which have only learndirect provision.

Learndirect's literacy and numeracy programmes are successful in improving learners' confidence, employability and life chances.

Initial teacher training

Introduction

180 Ofsted's inspections of providers of initial teacher training are carried out on a proportionate basis, with those previously judged to be good receiving a short inspection and those previously judged satisfactory or inadequate receiving a full inspection. New providers have full inspections.

181 During the academic year 2006/07, there were 29 short inspections and five full inspections of primary provision, and 29 short and nine full inspections of secondary provision. Of these, 54 inspections were of initial teacher training provided by partnerships led by higher education institutions. The remaining 18 inspections were of school-centred initial teacher training partnerships. Five new providers received full inspections. No employment-based initial teacher training routes were inspected. The inspection of further education teacher training included 12 higher education-led partnerships.

182 From September 2006, initial teacher training providers judged outstanding in their previous inspections have been receiving a light touch inspection by two inspectors. Under these new arrangements, inspectors have the flexibility to pursue particular lines of enquiry in consultation and agreement with the providers. Secondary providers with fewer than 30 trainees are inspected by teams of four inspectors at most.



Overall effectiveness and improvement

183 In 2006/07, the management and quality assurance of just under a half of the primary providers inspected and just over a half of the secondary providers are outstanding. Further education teacher training is of good quality in two thirds of the providers inspected.

184 Primary and secondary teacher training programmes are well led and managed. They are constantly revised and updated to take account of current national developments, such as the Rose review on the teaching of reading.²² The quality of training that takes place in providers' central bases, rather than in the schools in which trainees are based, is invariably good. A key strength is the attention paid to tailoring training to meet individual needs, starting at the interview stage. Providers recruit high calibre trainees, who demonstrate good skills in reflecting on their professional practice.

185 Quality assurance arrangements for the taught elements of trainees' programmes are robust in all phases. Providers use the information wisely to make informed decisions about revisions to the training programme. They demonstrate a relentless drive to secure improvement. However, they do not evaluate sufficiently the success of improvements made to training by considering the impact on the quality of trainees' teaching.

186 There is a strong link between trainees' proficiency in the classroom and the extent of their subject knowledge. Many trainees receive excellent subject support from tutors and trainers based centrally, but this high level of subject support is not always replicated in schools and further education settings. Some primary trainees do not receive sufficient subject-specific feedback from their teacher mentors in schools to enable them to apply their subject knowledge effectively. Mentors require more training to rectify this weakness.

187 In further education, too little attention is paid to monitoring the extent to which all trainees are able to apply their skills in literacy and numeracy so that they are well placed to develop these skills in their own students. This is a particular concern, given the national importance of raising attainment in basic skills among post-16 students. Subject support for trainees in the further education workplace remains too weak.

188 Trainees who successfully complete primary and secondary teacher training programmes are competent in managing the behaviour of the classes that they teach because the training programmes equip them well with practical strategies. Tutors also pay good attention in training sessions to developing the trainees' knowledge and understanding of how to meet the needs of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and of pupils for whom English is an additional language. However, not all trainees have opportunities to practise their skills in the classroom. Some primary trainees do not have good opportunities to teach across the full age range for which they are being trained. This latter point was highlighted in the Annual Report of 2005/06 and it remains a problem (see xx, p.99).

189 Providers do not always exploit the full potential of the diversity of schools within their partnerships to enable more trainees to benefit. In further education, not enough trainees have sufficient opportunities to teach across a range of courses and to teach students of different ages and abilities.



Providers recruit high calibre trainees, who demonstrate good skills in reflecting on their professional practice.

Social care inspections

Introduction

190 On 1 April 2007, Ofsted began the regulation and inspection of children's social care provision. This work builds on information and professional expertise from the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), from which many inspectors have joined the new Ofsted.

191 This section gives an overview of social care inspection findings published during the period up to March 2007, and Ofsted's findings since then. The final data for inspection findings for the period up to March 2007 will be available in the CSCI report *The state of social care in England 2006–07*, which is due for publication in January 2008.

192 In March 2007, CSCI looked back over its three years as a regulatory body and inspectorate for children's social care, and reported on the themes revealed through inspection and other regulatory activity.²³ This report acknowledged that, historically, looked after children had often been subject to poor quality services.

193 Good services made a positive difference in children's lives, so it is vital that strengths are identified and promoted. CSCI noted improvements in the protection of children from harm and greater stability in placements. CSCI also found that local authorities with strong provision of services to children shared important general characteristics. These include: clarity of vision; good service planning; good systems to involve children and young people in developing a range of care placements and in making improvements to services; high quality 'first contact' with children and families in need; good quality care plans; and systems of performance management that enable the outcomes for children to be tracked.

194 However, a considerable number of areas gave CSCI cause for concern. Children and families were not always getting access to the help they needed at an early enough stage. Once in a placement, children were not receiving continuing support to help them stay there. Vulnerable children and young people with mental health problems found that their problems were compounded by shortfalls in child and adolescent mental health services provision. Overall, the process of selecting residential and foster care placements for children and young people showed weaknesses, particularly in analysing and predicting long term needs.

195 It is clear from CSCI's work, and from the first Ofsted social care inspections, that children and young people want to be recognised as individuals, to have their views taken seriously and to be given an opportunity to contribute to the decisions which affect them. They would like the services they receive to be ones that meet their specific needs, rather than simply being whatever is available at the time. Children and young people value the relationships they already have before they come to the attention of social services. They may want to remain with their families, and they appreciate early interventions which enable them to do so. They like to know what is happening to them so that their future feels secure. Children and young people want to be able to enjoy continuity at school, to maintain their friendships and, if looked after, to have a stable placement.

Children and young people want to be recognised as individuals, to have their views taken seriously and to be given an opportunity to contribute to the decisions which affect them.

196 The CSCI report states that services for children in care are slowly getting better and addressing the issues that children and young people prioritise as important. Between 2004 and 2007 there was a very slight fall in the number of children subjected to three or more placement moves in a year. Most looked after children are in foster care or adoptive placements rather than residential care. Foster placements tend to be more local to the child's home and family. Reviews generally take place on time and with the appropriate involvement of the children concerned. In 2005/06, one in three children's homes met more than 90% of the national minimum standards, compared with only one in 10 in 2003. Similar improvements were shown in relation to fostering services. The overall proportions of local authorities judged to be good or excellent by CSCI, in relation to the contribution they make to improving social care services for children and young people, also increased. Assessments and care planning are more systematic, and safeguarding arrangements are generally more secure. Significant improvements have been made to adoption services. Children are commenting more positively on their experiences.

197 Nevertheless, CSCI also reported that a third of children's homes do not meet standards relating to health, safety and security or to the adequacy of staff. The rate of teenage pregnancy is not going down quickly enough. The most recently available government data, published in 2007, show that conception rates have dropped from 43.7 per 1,000 girls under the age of 18 in 2000 to 41.1 in 2005. Too many children do not have a named, qualified social worker and the educational achievements of children in care still fall far short of the achievement levels of all children.²⁴ The need to safeguard the welfare of children with complex needs is often overlooked by those responsible for their care. These children include those in secure settings as a result of mental health conditions, unaccompanied asylum seeking children and children who have committed offences. This is of particular concern in relation to those children and young people with challenging behaviour, who may be exposed to inappropriate forms of restraint.

198 CSCI's evaluation of the quality of children's services suggested that the majority did not meet all of the national minimum standards. There is still considerable room for improvement. In the case of inadequate providers, Ofsted sets appropriate actions to be taken within a limited period of time. Failure to carry out such actions may result in Ofsted's taking enforcement action such as issuing a compliance notice, cancelling registration, or prosecution if the provider continues to fall short of the requirement.



²⁴ *The state of social care in England 2005-06*, Commission for Social Care Inspection, 2006.

Social care inspections continued

Inspections from April to June 2007

199 Since April 2007, there have been over 800 children's social care inspections, including over 750 of children's homes, 25 of fostering agencies and 15 of residential special schools.

200 Each children's home is inspected twice yearly. One inspection, known as a full inspection, evaluates the provision in relation to all five of the Every Child Matters outcomes. The second inspection, known as an interim inspection, takes a more focused approach, concentrating on a smaller range of outcomes.

201 Between 1 April and 30 June 2007, there have been 347 full inspections of children's homes, and 416 interim inspections. Over half (54%) of the children's homes receiving a full inspection during this period are providing a service that is good or outstanding; one in three (30%) is satisfactory and one in seven (16%) is inadequate. In the 55 inadequate settings, inspectors issued notices of actions to improve in 53 cases, and put enforcement actions in place in the remaining two.

202 Where inspectors made judgements against individual outcomes during full inspections of children's homes, 60% of the provision to enable children to be healthy is good or outstanding. In relation to the staying safe outcome, children's homes are good or outstanding in 52% of cases. For enjoying and achieving, provision is good or outstanding in 76% of inspections.

203 Inspectors set actions that must be completed to meet regulations and make recommendations for ways in which settings can improve further. The numbers of actions set are generally highest in inadequate settings, with each having at least four. Most satisfactory settings have fewer than four actions. Actions are rarely set in good settings.

A wide range of actions has been set relating to matters such as the maintenance of premises, having proper risk assessments in place, record-keeping and staff training.

204 Recommendations are made in settings of all levels of effectiveness. In outstanding settings, recommendations generally focus on improving already good practice. As with actions, recommendations are varied and frequently relate to ensuring that good practices are consistently applied. They are often detailed, focusing on a particular element of the minimum standards or regulations.



Educational provision for children and young people in secure settings

Introduction

205 Children and young people can be accommodated in four types of secure setting: secure children's homes; secure training centres; young offender institutions; and, on occasions, immigration removal centres for short periods and accompanied by their families. Children and young people can be placed in a secure setting only if there is a relevant court decision that relates to the placement and the associated removal of that young person's liberty. Young offender institutions and immigration removal centres are inspected by Ofsted in partnership with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

206 Children and young people between the ages of 12 and 17 years can be sentenced to a detention and training order for between four months and two years. The first half of the sentence is spent in custody, and the second half is spent in the community under the supervision of a youth offending team. For more serious offences, longer sentences can be imposed. If a court adjourns a case, it can decide to remand a young person to local authority accommodation or to custody (secure remand).

207 Where looked after children and young people have a history of absconding, and when doing so are likely to suffer significant harm, and/or if they are placed in any other form of accommodation they are likely to injure themselves or others, the local authority can apply to the courts for the young person to be placed in a secure setting for their welfare under section 25 of the Children Act 1989.

Quality and standards

208 Although the standards across the range of secure settings remain variable, there has been some improvement since 2005/06. Of 17 institutions inspected during the academic year 2006/07, one secure training centre was outstanding, while six secure children's homes and one establishment with young people under 18 years of age were good. One secure children's home was inadequate. The quality of leadership and management has improved in all these institutions. There is a good focus on supporting children and young people to achieve appropriate accreditation, on personal and social development and, in secure children's homes, on contributing to the Every Child Matters outcomes.

209 More institutions are successful in meeting the diverse educational needs of a wide range of young people. Education for many of these young people has previously been a negative experience, with very few useful educational or personal achievements. Their standards in literacy and numeracy are often very low. Levels of accreditation have improved and are now at least satisfactory in most settings. There has been an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy and on ensuring that qualifications offered are recognised and valued by young people, employers and further education establishments. More settings have developed an appropriate range of provision, but provision remains too narrow in some institutions, and young people sometimes have to repeat their courses rather than experience other subjects.

210 Facilities for vocational training are often inadequate. This limits the opportunities for young people to develop useful workplace skills that will help them gain employment or go on to further education upon their release from custody. As in the past, there are not enough opportunities for young people to move on to more advanced courses. This is a particular issue for young people serving longer sentences in young offender institutions. The more able are often working below their ability levels. Most of the provision for young people below school leaving age does not meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Provision has rarely been designed specifically to meet their needs.

211 In those institutions with good educational outcomes, the young people enjoy their learning and often make good progress, with many experiencing success for the first time in their lives. In the better settings, teaching is effective and provides the young people with work that interests, involves and challenges them. They are responsive to good teaching and rightly take pride in the progress they are making. In the less effective settings, expectations of what young people will achieve and how they will behave are often too low. In almost all institutions, there are systems for the assessment of young people's levels of literacy and numeracy. However, the resulting information is not used efficiently to inform teaching and learning. The teaching of literacy and numeracy too often fails to motivate or engage young people. In the more successful institutions, there are close links between the teaching of literacy and numeracy and work in vocational studies.

Educational provision for children and young people in secure settings continued

212 The provision for young people with learning difficulties or disabilities is not always matched to their needs. Staff do not make effective use of individual learning plans in considering the next steps in learning or in tracking the progress of the young people.

213 The more effective institutions work with a range of external partners to plan challenging and imaginative programmes for learners and to raise their ambitions for the future. Staff in most institutions overcome considerable difficulties to make the accommodation as pleasant as possible through, for example, the imaginative use of learners' artwork. Incentives are generally used well to encourage the young people.

214 Increasingly, planned educational provision within secure children's homes is contributing to the five outcomes of the Every Child Matters legislation, especially to 'be healthy', with many units aspiring to the Healthy Schools initiative. However, little focus is given to the Every Child Matters agenda for children and young people in young offender institutions. Limited opportunities for release on temporary licence severely inhibit the preparation of young people to gain employment and so to achieve economic well-being on their return to the community.

215 The management of unacceptable behaviour has improved further in the institutions inspected. Behaviour is good in institutions where the behaviour policy is understood clearly and applied consistently. In young offender institutions, there has been a marked reduction in the number of young people being returned to residential wings from education for poor behaviour. Relationships between prison and residential care staff and education staff across the range of secure accommodation are generally good. Progress in making sure that education and training are given priority within settings is variable.

Too often, security issues inhibit access to appropriate provision for children and young people. There remain some aspects of institutional life which have an adverse effect on the quality of educational provision. For example, moving the young people from residential accommodation to teaching areas often takes too long so that they arrive late and learning time is lost.

216 The provision for young people about to return to the outside world remains uneven in quality. Not enough is done to help them prepare for their release and there are not enough opportunities for them to access vocational learning or to develop independent living skills. Links between education and resettlement departments are often tenuous. The quality of careers guidance and education is often inadequate. The failure to provide suitable education and training to young people for the community element of their sentences, or upon release, remains a significant concern.

217 The quality of leadership and management has improved in most of the secure estates inspected. Senior managers now place more emphasis on improving the quality of provision, but in some settings this has not yet resulted in improved outcomes. There is greater rigour in institutional self-assessment and in the evaluation of teaching and learning, but there is still some overestimation of effectiveness.

The provision for young people about to return to the outside world remains uneven in quality.

There is too great a gap
between outcomes for the
majority of children and
young people and for those
who have the greatest
disadvantages to overcome.



Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service

Introduction

218 The Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass) is a single agency covering England that provides a social work service to children and families who are involved in family proceedings and where the welfare of children is, or may be, in question. Its statutory functions are to:

- safeguard and promote the welfare of the children
- give advice to any court about any applications made to it in such proceedings
- make provision for such children to be represented in such proceedings
- provide information, advice and other support for the children and their families.

219 The work of Cafcass has immediate and high impact on nearly 100,000 children and their families each year. Applications in family proceedings in which Cafcass advises the courts typically come at critical junctures in the lives of children, and when some of the most far-reaching decisions can be taken about children's lives. These include making:

- a care order that usually places a child away from the family, perhaps with minimal contact and possibly with no view to eventual rehabilitation; or supporting the local authority plan for long term alternative care; or the transfer of parental responsibility to new parents through adoption
- an order as to where, after the separation or divorce of parents, a child should reside, or with whom the child should have contact
- more specialist orders in dealing with international abduction and ethical or medical cases which concern children with life-threatening conditions.

Inspection findings

220 From April 2007, Ofsted has been responsible for the inspection of Cafcass. The current inspection of Cafcass in the East Midlands will be reported later in the year. It already shows the range of challenges facing Cafcass, as well as the courts and other key agencies, in assisting vulnerable children at a particularly crucial stage in their lives. The way family proceedings are handled in the courts is being influenced by a number of judicially led initiatives covering both private and public law.

221 Cafcass in the East Midlands is performing well against many of its key performance indicators and leads the national organisation in many of these measures. Ofsted has seen evidence to support this picture, but inspectors have also identified areas of unacceptable practice that include:

- safeguarding vulnerable children
- processes to ensure the quality of work, for example supervision of staff
- recording in case files
- the inconsistent way in which they assess cases and report to family courts.

222 At a strategic level, Cafcass has become stronger in developing policies, procedures and practice. However, the necessary improvements in delivering front-line services are not implemented consistently. The inspection referred to above again highlights one of Cafcass's principal challenges, which is to improve the organisation's translation of policy into practice.

Children's services in local authorities

Introduction

223 Between September 2005 and the end of 2008, children's services in all local authority areas will have been inspected under the Children Act 2004. Inspections of these services are known as joint area reviews. In the academic year 2006/07, 49 joint area reviews were carried out. Ofsted is responsible for leading and coordinating the work of a number of inspectorates and commissions in conducting joint area reviews. For most of the areas in which a joint area review is carried out, it is supplemented by a simultaneous inspection of the local youth service together with a youth offending team inspection, which is conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Probation.

224 From April 2007, joint area review arrangements were modified to target children and young people at greatest risk of underachieving and most in need of safeguarding. Modifications were also made in order to target areas of underperformance. As part of the modified arrangements, inspectors always evaluate the arrangements for safeguarding children, the impact of services for looked after children and those for children and young people with learning difficulties or disabilities.

225 Annual performance assessments of local services are conducted each year and focus on analysing the contribution that a council's own services have made in the previous 12 months towards improving outcomes for children and young people. A wide range of published evidence is considered alongside the council's review of its progress. No fieldwork activities are carried out.

226 In November 2006, 102 annual performance assessments, conducted by the Commission for Social Care Inspection and Ofsted, were published. Judgements were made about:

- children's services and the contribution made by council services to improving outcomes for children and young people
- the council's capacity to improve these services further.

Inspection findings

227 The evidence from joint area reviews and annual performance assessments shows that 16 children's services were judged to be better than the previous year and partners are working well together to secure better outcomes for children and young people. Seven children's services were judged to be weaker. There is too great a gap between outcomes for the majority of children and young people and for those who have the greatest disadvantages to overcome. There are examples of high quality services from which there is evidence of improvements in outcomes for children and young people most in need of support. However, much work remains to be done to ensure that those with significant hurdles to overcome achieve their full potential.

228 Local authorities that have given high priority to preventative work in recent years are beginning to see the numbers of looked after children reducing. Support for carers and availability of, and stability in, placements are improving. These improvements are not consistent, however, and too many children and young people are still cared for a long way from their local areas. In many areas, looked after children play a full role in the review of their placement plans. Too often, however, their involvement is piecemeal and uncoordinated, and is not given sufficient importance.

229 The educational achievement of looked after children is improving, but very slowly; it still lags well behind that of their peers. Too often, local areas compare the standards achieved by looked after children with those achieved by similar children in previous years, or with those achieved in other areas. This sometimes results in favourable comparisons but it does not achieve the change that is required in approaches and expectations. Poor attendance at school continues to be a significant problem and a key factor in any underachievement. However, the number of looked after children involved in the youth justice system has declined since last year. The trend for the last five years shows that an increasing proportion of young people leaving care at the age of 16 is engaged in education, employment and training. Better accommodation is being offered to meet their needs.

Children's services in local authorities continued

230 Healthcare and safeguarding arrangements for children and young people with learning difficulties or disabilities are often good. They are usually well supported in their school and make satisfactory or good progress overall. In most areas they are encouraged to participate in discussions about their progress and to give their views on the service they are receiving and how it might be improved. In some cases, however, they have to wait too long for specialist services. The uncertain future of some specialist services in some areas causes anxiety for parents and children. The range of courses and opportunities for 16-year-olds is improving, but young people with learning difficulties or disabilities do not always have the breadth of opportunities that are open to others.

231 The needs of Black and other minority ethnic groups are increasingly well reflected in local plans. Significant attention is being paid to the often increasingly diverse nature of communities. In some areas, however, such issues receive scant attention. Data about progress and achievement are beginning to be kept, but the outcomes achieved by Black and other minority ethnic groups are not evaluated regularly to help inform planning. Where concerted and coordinated attention is given to improving outcomes for Black and other minority ethnic groups, particularly boys, achievement for other children and young people also appears to improve.

232 Partnership working is improving. There is stronger governance by local safeguarding children boards; more effective liaison between social workers, health professionals and schools; and increasing multi-agency family support through children's centres. The relationship between the voluntary and community sector and the local partnerships varies greatly. Where the sector is closely involved, there is a positive impact on the outcomes for vulnerable children and young people. At times, however, some voluntary and community sector partners feel left out of important decision-making, and valuable additional resources are not fully utilised.

233 Most partnerships are improving the rigour and accuracy of their evaluations of the outcomes achieved by children and young people. Some partnerships are successfully evaluating the impact made by particular services on these outcomes and beginning to engage effectively with children and young people in the design of services. However, the success of the contributions made by some services is greatly overestimated, with the result that senior managers and elected members are not fully aware of current needs and are unable to challenge performance robustly. The most successful partnerships undertake rigorous self-reviews, based on secure data, as a central pillar of their work. This ensures that the most pressing priorities are identified and that resources are targeted effectively, particularly at the development of preventative services.

234 Some local areas are improving the effectiveness with which they manage transition arrangements for young people as they move to adult services. This is having a positive impact on how well they progress. Those councils giving close attention to the needs of individual children from an early age generally provide more effective services.

235 In the most successful local authorities, there is a clear focus on health inequalities. This has ensured that the needs of vulnerable children and young people, such as those with emotional or learning difficulties, are targeted with increasing effectiveness. The speed with which children and young people are referred to, or treated by, a mental health specialist has improved but waiting times are still too long. The provision for in-patient and outreach services is mixed. In some areas, all children are admitted to a specialist children's and young people's ward, but in others they are regularly admitted to adult wards. Some partner agencies are unclear about the remit of the child and adolescent mental health services, and arrangements for access are unclear. These issues adversely affect unaccompanied asylum seeking young people and refugees, and those known to youth offending services.

236 The rate of teenage pregnancy is falling generally, although it remains unacceptably high. The most recent government figures, published in 2007 and already cited in the section of this report concerned with social care inspections, show a fall in conception rates, from 43.7 per 1,000 girls under the age of 18 in 2000 to 41.1 in 2005. There are considerable differences in the rates in neighbouring areas serving similar kinds of need.

237 Schools are improving the knowledge that children and young people have about nutrition and the importance of exercise, through initiatives such as the Healthy Schools programme and the growth in sporting opportunities. An Ofsted survey of food in schools (see ix, p.99) found that most pupils had a good understanding of healthy eating but too often this had little bearing on the food they chose. Headteachers' views on school meals and the priority they gave to healthy eating influenced the quality of provision.

238 In the context of staying safe, the contribution of local services to improving outcomes for children and young people at risk is generally good. Many children and young people feel safe, particularly in their schools. Where police officers are deployed to work closely with specific schools they invariably make a strong contribution and are valued by pupils and staff. However, some children and young people feel unsafe in their local areas, and some of those most at risk feel that they do not receive the quality of service that they need. In the best cases, schools and other key partners give significant attention to ensuring safe practice and providing effective guidance on how to stay safe. In these local service areas, thresholds for referral to social care services are understood and supported by all agencies; effective social services duty and referral systems are managed to a good standard with a full contribution from partner agencies. Where services are effective, all children on the child protection register and all looked after children have a qualified social worker, and reviews are carried out on time, with appropriate input from partner agencies.

239 Where there are weaknesses in these services, in some areas there are increased levels of risk for children and young people. These most frequently occur when thresholds for access to social care services are set too high and there is no shared understanding of their purpose and application. Delays in investigating child protection concerns and in completing assessments increase the level of risk and restrict the contribution made by partner agencies. Weak management information, quality assurance and performance management restrict the quality of service offered. In some cases, difficulties in recruiting qualified social workers result in children being without an allocated, permanent social worker and there is a reliance on unqualified and temporary staff.

240 The best local partnerships make full use of the power of education to improve life chances for children and young people. Such partnerships are confident in their ability to raise standards, articulate their vision well and have clear evidence to show the difference they are making. There is a strong focus on raising standards and on narrowing the gap between outcomes achieved by young people in general and those who are underachieving. Self-evaluation is rigorous, honest and challenging. The tracking of the progress of pupils is given high priority and supports effectively the work carried out to deal with any underachievement. This has a particularly good impact on outcomes for Black and other minority ethnic young people, especially boys. Support for weak schools is rapid, effective and uncompromising.

241 Where local partnerships achieve only adequate educational outcomes for children and young people, they have ineffective strategies to tackle poor school attendance. High levels of pupil exclusions and a lack of appropriate provision to re-engage excluded pupils and those not attending school remain unchecked by senior managers. Despite the strong start many children make to their schooling, impetus is lost as they grow older, resulting in lower achievement by the time they reach Key Stage 4. The most pressing issues are not tackled quickly enough and the pace of improvement begins to slow during Key Stage 2.

Children's services in local authorities continued

242 Staff in most areas are working hard to involve children and young people in making decisions that affect their lives. Particular attention is paid to the participation of children and young people whose circumstances make them harder to reach. In most areas, many young people take advantage of opportunities to contribute to their communities and to make decisions that shape services. Youth services often take a lead in these developments.

243 The quality of youth work is improving, but it is still weak and viewed as a 'Cinderella' service. In 11 of the 22 areas in which the joint area review included an enhanced youth inspection, the youth services are giving good or outstanding provision for young people aged between 13 and 19 years. A further seven were judged adequate and four are inadequate.

244 The best services provide wide ranging activities and targeted projects, and involve young people fully in the design of services. This approach increases the opportunities for enjoyable activities, and develops personal qualities, self-esteem and useful skills. In particular, the best services are successful in involving some of the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups. The contribution made by youth workers to sexual health programmes, and in developing an effective voice for young people in local areas, is a very strong feature. Too often, however, youth services are not fully incorporated into a coordinated approach towards children's services. Their work is not always valued or understood and its potential impact is underestimated.

245 Many local areas are using all local services and agencies successfully, including the police, youth services, youth offending teams and voluntary groups, to tackle anti-social behaviour. In a small minority of areas, the impact of local collaboration is less effective and many young offenders are not able to re-engage with their communities effectively. This is often due to variable access to a range of services, including those for education, employment and training, and mental health.

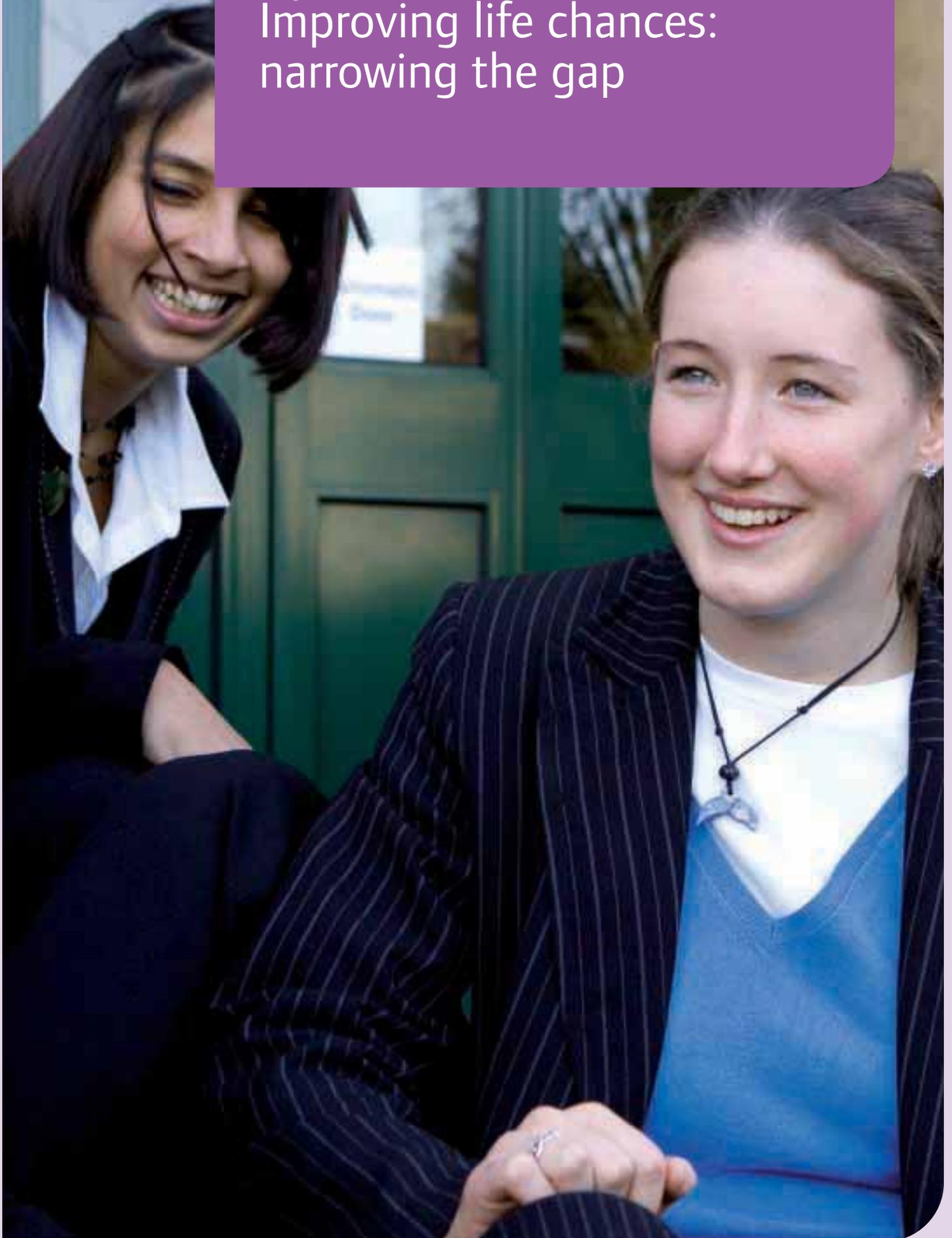
246 Despite much effort, a great deal of improvement is still required to ensure that all young people aged between 14 and 19 years have consistently good quality educational and training opportunities. Many local areas have given this work high priority and this is beginning to improve the accuracy of local assessments of what is required for young people in the area. Communication and collaboration between children's services, schools, colleges and other agencies and providers, including the voluntary sector, are becoming more effective. Innovative joint working is slowly improving the range of learning options available. Unfortunately, some local authorities find it difficult to broker effective partnership working, particularly where, historically, providers have had too much independence and lack of accountability. The sharpest contrast is between school sixth forms and other forms of provision. Too often, school sixth forms provide a narrow range of vocational qualifications and life skills courses. Where services are ineffective, insufficient information about young people's learning needs is transferred between schools and post-16 learning providers.

247 A further difficulty for young people seeking a vocational route is that some local areas have found it difficult to engage work-based providers and adequate numbers of medium to small local employers to ensure that a sufficiently broad range of options is available. In some cases, the limited collaboration between Learning and Skills Councils and Connexions is at the root of the problem.

248 An increasing proportion of young people, including those who are looked after, young offenders and those with disabilities, continues in education, training or employment beyond the age of 16. Retention rates are improving. The proportion of Black and other minority ethnic students staying on in full-time education is also rising. Local areas achieving good outcomes for their young people increasingly share accurate data between key agencies in order to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training.

Key themes

Improving life chances: narrowing the gap



Improving life chances: narrowing the gap

Overview

- Too often children and young people from deprived backgrounds, or who are disadvantaged in other ways, experience poorer provision and make less progress than their peers.
- While much remains to be done, inspections in 2006/07 identified good practice among a range of providers in enabling potentially vulnerable groups of learners to succeed.
- There was a trend of improvement in planning and collaboration by local children's services but still insufficient impact on outcomes for disadvantaged young people.
- At different levels within the education service, low attainment in basic skills, particularly in literacy, hindered the progress and prospects of learners. In secondary schools, the quality of intervention to help pupils with poor literacy skills was too inconsistent.
- With the support of the London Challenge programme, there was significant improvement in pupils' achievement in a number of London schools with a history of poor performance.
- The unacceptable gap between the standards achieved by looked after children and their peers continued; it was reflected in the poorer career opportunities and life chances of this group of young people.
- Poor attendance hindered the learning of too many pupils. There was a clear link between low attendance and deprivation, but also between attendance and the quality of education. Attendance was highest in schools in which the teaching was most effective.
- An Ofsted survey found that pupils of Black Caribbean and mixed White/Black Caribbean heritage were excluded in disproportionate numbers.
- Too often, the provision in pupil referral units for permanently excluded and other pupils was inadequate. Successful pupil referral units focused on pupils' academic and personal development and on enabling them to make a successful transition to the next stage of their lives.
- Provision and outcomes for young people in secure accommodation were too inconsistent in enabling them to acquire the skills necessary for progress to further education or employment.
- There were examples of good practice in colleges in supporting literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages, enabling young people and adults who had previously failed in school to succeed.



The impact of disadvantage

249 Ofsted's report *Narrowing the gap* showed that the biggest challenge continues to be reducing the gap in opportunities and outcomes between relatively advantaged children and young people and those who have to cope with the highest levels of disadvantage in our society (see xvi, p.99). Despite some improvements, inconsistencies in the quality of education and care for young people persist. Across early years education and care, schools, colleges and adult learning, inadequate provision still compounds the disadvantages experienced by many learners.

250 Headline figures indicate what remains to be done. In September 2007, 20% of all 11-year-olds transferring from primary schools had achieved standards in English below those expected for their age; in mathematics, the figure was 23%. Meanwhile, at the end of compulsory secondary school, in 2006 about 10.3% of 16- to 18-year-olds were not engaged in education, employment or training.

251 Poor outcomes for many especially vulnerable pupils showed that education and care fell far short of meeting their needs. Taking one important group as an example, 12% of 16-year-olds in public care achieved five or more GCSE passes at A*–C grades in 2006, compared with 59% of all 16-year-olds. Young people in public care were also three times more likely than their peers to commit offences resulting in a caution or conviction.

Poverty and achievement

252 Recent data analyses and research studies confirm the close association between poverty and low educational achievement, with pupils from low income backgrounds continuing to perform less well than more advantaged pupils. It is important to bear in mind that there are highly effective providers in all phases of care and education who enable children and young people in neighbourhoods of poverty to make outstanding progress. Nationally, however, the differences between the standards achieved by the two groups are evident at Key Stage 1 and persist through the subsequent stages:

■ At Key Stage 2, in 2006, 61% of pupils eligible for free school meals achieved the expected level in English and 58% achieved it in mathematics. This compares with 83% and 79% respectively of those pupils not eligible.

■ In the GCSE examinations in 2006, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A*–C grades was 33% among those eligible for free school meals. The figure for the non-eligible group was 61%.²⁵

253 While the association between poverty and underachievement is strong, it is not straightforward. Family income does not explain everything; other factors, including ethnicity and gender, have significant effects. Overall, White British boys from low income backgrounds make less progress than most other groups.

254 As *Narrowing the gap* confirmed, it remains the case that schools with high proportions of pupils from deprived backgrounds are more likely to be inadequate than those serving more affluent communities (see xvi, p.99). Among schools inspected, 20.2% had 30% or more pupils entitled to free school meals. Of those schools in which overall effectiveness was inadequate, 36.5% had 30% or more pupils entitled to free school meals. In other words, disproportionate numbers of deprived pupils attended inadequate schools. It is important to note, however, that there are many instances of highly successful schools in areas where pupils are from communities with high levels of deprivation.

255 Analysis of a sample of inspection reports for outstanding schools in areas of economic deprivation revealed that these schools had a number of features in common. Responsibilities were shared among a strong team of senior staff, so that the success of the school did not depend wholly upon the leadership of the headteacher, as important as that was. Staff were ambitious in their expectations of the pupils' achievement. They provided high quality teaching, made careful use of assessment and provided close support for individual pupils' personal and academic development. These schools provided a broad and rich curriculum, with a clear focus on raising attainment in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Pupils entered with standards below those found nationally and made outstanding progress, often leaving with attainment in line with or even above the national average.

²⁵ Source: *National Curriculum Assessments, GCSE and Equivalent Attainment and Post-16 Attainment by Pupil Characteristics in England 2005/06 (Revised)*, Statistical First Release SFR 04/2007, DfES, 2007; www.dcsf.gov.uk.

Improving life chances: narrowing the gap continued

Pupils and parents were highly supportive of their schools and well aware of the high quality of education and care provided.

Groups most at risk of poor achievement

256 The learners most likely to achieve poorly include: looked after children; pupils who persistently absent themselves from school; those with challenging behaviour; and young people in secure settings. While the aspiration plainly is that these learners should have the best opportunities for care, learning and development that our institutions can offer, that aspiration remains unmet for many.

Looked after children

257 Since 2000, reforms and investment have been put in place to improve the life chances of looked after children. To date, the impact of these reforms on educational achievement has been limited. The proportion of looked after children achieving five or more A*–C passes in GCSE has risen but at a slower rate than for all pupils nationally, so that the achievement gap is growing, not reducing. In 2006, 12% of looked after children achieved five or more A*–C grades in GCSE and 63% gained at least one certificate. The figures for all 16-year-olds were 59% and 98%, respectively.

258 In 2006/07, as in the previous two years, there was no reduction in the proportion of looked after children missing school for 25 days or more in the year. Looked after children were also far more likely to be permanently excluded from school than others.

259 Although the number of looked after children in the youth justice system declined, they were still more likely to be involved in crime than other young people. About 9% of looked after children committed offences for which they were cautioned or convicted, a rate three times higher than the average. Those who had been in public care in childhood were also over-represented among the adult prison population.

Persistent absentees

260 Judgements about attendance showed a more positive picture for schools inspected in 2006/07 than for those schools inspected in the previous year. Attendance was good in approaching half the primary and secondary schools inspected and satisfactory in the same number. However, attendance was inadequate in 4% of primary schools and in 7% of secondary and special schools. The high level of absence evident in London schools inspected in 2005/06 has been tackled with some success.

261 The latest analysis of attendance figures for secondary pupils from the former Department for Education and Skills, now the Department for Children, Schools and Families, became available in March 2007. It shows that 7% of secondary school pupil enrolments accounted for 30% of absence overall and for almost 61% of unauthorised absence in 2005/06. Moreover, 7% of secondary pupil enrolments had absence levels of more than 20% during the same school year.²⁶

262 An Ofsted survey of attendance in secondary schools in 2006 showed a clear relationship between deprivation, poor health and lower rates of attendance (see i, p.99). As the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals increased, overall attendance deteriorated. However, there was also a link between attendance and the quality of teaching; in the schools surveyed, where teaching was effective there were higher levels of attendance.

Pupils with challenging behaviour

263 Inspections during the year showed that the proportion of secondary schools in which behaviour was just satisfactory was more than three times that of primary schools (29% compared with 8%). Behaviour was no better than satisfactory in 11% of all schools inspected. While it was rarely inadequate across a whole school, in the small minority of cases in which it was only satisfactory, persistent disruption on the part of a few pupils in some classes affected their learning and that of others. Disruptive behaviour was often, though not always, linked to poor teaching and inadequate assessment.

264 Poor behaviour can result in fixed term or permanent exclusion. A survey of 20 secondary schools and over 1,000 self-evaluation forms completed by schools across England found that a disproportionate number of pupils of Black Caribbean heritage and mixed White/Black Caribbean heritage, predominantly boys, were excluded from school. This disproportionate level of exclusion was evident among schools in the sample with differing levels of overall effectiveness, overall standards of behaviour and eligibility of pupils for free school meals.

265 Permanent exclusion can lead to placement in a pupil referral unit. While over half the units inspected this year were good or outstanding, one in eight was inadequate, providing a poor experience for young people whose prospects of achievement were already severely compromised. The fact that rates of absence among pupils at risk in this way were five times higher than the average is a cause for serious concern.

Children and young people with learning difficulties or disabilities

266 Where pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities made good or outstanding progress, staff assessed their attainment and tracked their progress carefully. Effective planning ensured that resources and support were targeted to meet pupils' particular needs so that their skills and confidence developed at a good pace. Teaching assistants provided a high quality of support in these schools, whether in whole-class lessons or in smaller groups for specialised work.

267 Conversely, in schools in which pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities underachieved, work was not planned to match their needs. As a result, the tasks set were too hard or they were not demanding enough to extend pupils' skills and understanding. The quality and range of support provided by teaching assistants were uneven. There was inadequate development in these schools of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy, limiting pupils' ability to cope with the demands of the curriculum and, in the longer term, to make a successful transition to the workplace.

268 A survey in a small sample of colleges of the provision for 16- to 18-year-olds with learning difficulties or disabilities found very uneven quality (see iv, p.99). A key feature in the most effective colleges visited, irrespective of type, was the leadership of the principals and senior managers in establishing a college-wide inclusive ethos and a commitment to working with learners with learning difficulties or disabilities. Extensive staff development programmes were well attended in these colleges and their effectiveness was measured. The achievement of learners on accredited programmes was generally high. As with schools, the type of setting was less significant than the quality of teaching; well qualified and experienced specialist staff, supported effectively, ensured the best outcomes.

Young people in secure settings

269 At any one time, about 3,000 young people under the age of 18 are in secure children's homes, secure training centres or young offender institutions. Most of these young people are boys and many are, or have been, in public care.

270 Provision for these young people has improved but it was still too uneven in the institutions inspected during the year. In a minority of secure settings, teaching engaged the pupils well and the curriculum was appropriate to their needs, giving some a first chance to achieve success in education. Too often, however, the curriculum, including the range of vocational provision, was limited and the teaching was not challenging enough. More able young people had too few chances to move on to more advanced courses and there was insufficient preparation for the return to the outside world.

Improving life chances: narrowing the gap continued

Strategies to improve outcomes

271 Many providers enable individuals to succeed against the odds. What follows describes some of the good practice seen in inspections of local authorities, early years settings, schools, colleges and adult learning which helps to narrow the gap in achievement. It also points to issues on which systematic action remains essential if improvement is to be more widespread and consistent.

Local authorities

272 Joint area reviews carried out during the year showed improvement in the planning of children's services and collaboration among partners, but they indicated that this improvement was not yet having enough impact on outcomes for disadvantaged young people.

273 Children's services judged excellent during 2006/07 shared common features which enabled them to narrow the gap in achievement for particular groups. The key to success was leadership and management which demonstrated clear knowledge of the organisation's strengths and weaknesses, based on good use of data. This enabled the partners to identify their priorities and to target resources where they were most needed, particularly in the development of preventative services.

274 In local authority areas in which support for looked after children was effective, there was good use of data and targets to track and steer personal and academic progress; children were consulted about their own education plans; and carers, as well as pupils, were given good careers advice to enable the young people to make a successful transition at the post-16 stage. Outcomes, in the form of participation rates in education, employment and training, were good.

275 Survey work carried out for the report *Narrowing the gap* also emphasised the importance of the planning and management of transitional arrangements as young people moved on to adult services (see xvi, p.99). This had a particularly profound impact on children with learning difficulties or disabilities, as well as on those living outside their original local area.

Case study: preventative action by a local authority

Very good progress has been made in setting up preventative services which provide early support as well as more intensive work for children and their families. Preventative work ranges from early intervention with families who may need support to more intensive work to avoid the need for children and young people becoming looked after. Support is provided directly from a range of sources which are well coordinated.

The council has managed effectively the rising number of young people who offend for the first time through good, targeted early intervention. Partners work well together to reduce anti-social behaviour; Safer Neighbourhood teams, the youth service and the youth offending team collaborate closely on creative, preventative and diversionary projects which are having a positive impact. High numbers of young people who offend benefit from participating in education, employment or training, and reoffending rates are reducing significantly.

New and innovative preventative services, designed around service users' preferences and offering consultation to parents and staff at an early stage, are developing very well. Take-up of services by young people from Black and minority ethnic groups is monitored, with effective action taken to address issues. For example, research into the low take-up of childcare services has improved awareness of needs and contributed to current childcare strategy.

276 By contrast, the inspection of some local services identified weaknesses in the strategies used to help schools to promote good attendance, engagement and inclusion, to tackle behaviour problems and to minimise exclusion (see xviii, p.99). These included: inadequate support to tackle poor levels of attendance; inadequate measures to raise the attainment of looked after children and other groups of pupils, including some from Black and minority ethnic groups; inaction in tackling high levels of permanent and fixed-term exclusions; and a lack of appropriate provision to re-engage excluded pupils and those out of school.

277 Another of the weaknesses identified in the report was the ineffectiveness of the action taken to reduce the numbers of looked after children or to secure affordable and appropriate placements for them. The quality of provision for looked after children remained uneven. Common obstacles to improvement of outcomes for them included: the lack of sufficient and appropriate placements, resulting in too much instability in placements; not enough availability of qualified social workers; inadequate or missing personal education plans; and poor attendance. These factors contributed to low attainment at post-16 and below average participation in education, training or employment.

Early years settings

278 In effective local partnerships, inspected through joint area reviews, children were given a good start through high quality early years provision. Some authorities were able to show early evidence of the effect of Sure Start programmes and the development of integrated children's centres, which were providing support for children and families in particularly difficult circumstances.²⁷

279 Ofsted's inspections of childcare during the year found that over half of providers gave good or outstanding support for learning. In good day-care settings, favourable staff-child ratios enabled practitioners to work alongside children in their play and to tailor activities for all ages and for children with learning difficulties or disabilities. Childminders interacted well with children, presenting questions to help them think, extend their vocabulary and increase their understanding of mathematical concepts. In day-care settings, practitioners regularly observed and assessed what children could do. These assessments were used to plan for the children's next steps in development and practitioners pitched activities and questions appropriately for individual children.

280 The best childcare providers gave good support to children and families who were learning to speak English as an additional language. Activities were set up in order to enhance confidence, build vocabulary and extend the use of language through games and in other practical ways. Children at the earliest stages of learning English communicated successfully, using sign and body language while gaining proficiency. Adults encouraged inclusion by using dual-language books and displaying signs in children's home languages, as well as in English, to support their learning.

281 The best providers encouraged children to think about how they were behaving and what they could expect from others. They involved children in developing the rules of the setting, and in helping to make sure the rules were followed. They used positive methods to manage behaviour and to distract children promptly from negative behaviour.

Schools

Schools' success in overcoming disadvantage

282 Key processes and relationships in schools have repeatedly been identified as crucial in countering disadvantage through forming and reinforcing pupils' attitudes to, and success in, learning. Inspections continued to underline the importance of three factors in particular:

- an overall ethos that expects and promotes high standards and insists on good behaviour
- effective management of lessons that draws on accurate assessment of learning, sets clear objectives, engages pupils and uses a variety of activities at a good pace to achieve challenging targets
- the capacity of staff to engage with, and respond to, pupils and parents in order to meet pupils' needs.

²⁷ Sure Start is a government programme which aims to ensure the best start in life for every child, bringing together early education, childcare, health and family support.

Improving life chances: narrowing the gap continued

283 Schools that are successful in overcoming disadvantage:

- connect action on achievement with action on attendance, attitudes and personal development
- focus on improving the skills needed for effective communication and independent learning
- attach high priority to the learning of literacy and numeracy skills
- organise a relevant curriculum coherently, with enrichment of it through well planned activities that extend experience and horizons
- provide close monitoring of, and support for, pupils.

284 Increasing the number of schools that achieve success in countering disadvantage in these ways remains of the highest priority. *Narrowing the gap* found that weaker local authorities gave less effective support to schools causing concern and insufficient challenge to those schools judged to be coasting (see xvi, p.99).

London Challenge

285 Investment in the London Challenge, initially a five year partnership between the Government, schools and London boroughs to enhance the quality of secondary schools in the capital, has led to improved outcomes. Ofsted's report, *Improvements in London schools 2000–06*, (see xiii, p.99) showed standards were rising faster in poorly performing London schools than in similar schools in England as a whole. As part of the London Challenge project, which began in 2003, 70 secondary schools and five local authorities were given intensive support by a team of advisers. Their role was to build management and leadership capacity in schools alongside local authorities' own advisers. They worked to ensure that schools made best use of national and local resources. The combination of focus, expertise and resources helped to reduce underperformance where it existed.

286 At its launch in 2003, the London Challenge focused on secondary schools. In September 2006, the project was extended to primary schools, and the report showed that some have already benefited.

Children's centres and extended schools

287 An Ofsted survey in 2006/07 evaluated the impact of services provided by 30 children's centres and 32 schools which had established or were developing extended services (see xii, p.99). The survey found that over three quarters of the children's centres provided good or outstanding provision, matched to the needs of the children and their families.

288 Almost a third of the schools visited had data illustrating improved attendance as a consequence of their extended provision (see xii, p.99). Breakfast clubs were often a key factor in improving attendance and punctuality, especially where particularly vulnerable pupils were targeted. The provision of services to develop pupils' study skills and leisure interests had a considerable effect on their attitudes and behaviour, and many schools reported a reduction in the number of exclusions.

Case study: a family learning project at a Birmingham primary school

At this large primary school, more than 95% of the pupils speak English as an additional language and over half are eligible for free school meals; more than 14% have special educational needs. On starting school almost all pupils have skills, knowledge and understanding that in some aspects are well below those expected for their age.

The school is involved in several initiatives, including Excellence in Cities and the Pathfinder Project on workforce remodelling. The TILE project (Towards Improving Learning and Employability) involves at least one family member agreeing to undertake information and communication technology training with the Year 3 pupil as the educator. The families of Year 3 pupils pay a modest fee for a computer and broadband access with technical support provided by a school governor. There is quantifiable evidence of the positive impact of the project on standards and particularly on boys' literacy. It shows a clear link between engagement with information and communication technology and attainment in English and mathematics.

Parental engagement

289 An Ofsted survey of the extent to which parents and carers were actively engaged in the education of children and young people was carried out in primary and secondary schools which serve a range of different communities, in urban and rural contexts (see xvii, p.99). The best schools worked with parents, carers and other members of the family. These schools were good at informing parents about subjects, examination requirements and subject choices. They were good at working effectively with specific groups of parents, particularly those with children with learning difficulties or disabilities. They also invited parents to participate in developing behaviour policies. Successful management of pupils' behaviour almost always involved timely communication with the home. Parents whose children had done something wrong had more confidence in the school when the consequences of unacceptable behaviour were fully explained and they also found meetings with staff helpful.

Improving achievement in English and mathematics in secondary schools

290 The Secondary National Strategy includes programmes to support pupils who enter secondary school having achieved standards at the end of Key Stage 2 which are below those expected for their age. These interventions are put in place in Year 7 in order to raise the pupils' attainment in English and mathematics in particular.

291 Ofsted found that the quality of the intervention programmes in literacy was too inconsistent. Where intervention was ineffective, it was too often made without accurate knowledge of pupils' individual areas of weakness. Assessment was not used well in planning the support, in tracking pupils' progress after the support was introduced or in teaching. Teaching assistants did not always have the necessary training and experience to modify work and the pace of learning to suit the pupils' particular needs. Opportunities to develop links between the intervention programmes and relevant work in other subjects were missed.

Attendance

292 The Behaviour and Attendance programme forms part of the National Strategies for school improvement. An Ofsted survey focused on the impact of this programme on secondary school attendance, which was found to be having a positive effect in the 351 target schools. Considerable work was done to reduce the numbers of pupils identified as truanting persistently: in 2005/06, there were 27% fewer persistent truants in the target schools than in 2004/05 (see i, p.99)

293 Several critical factors were identified as successful in reducing attendance problems in secondary schools. There was a close link between good provision and good attendance; high quality teaching and a flexible curriculum had a significant and positive effect on attendance.

294 The schools in the survey had ensured that improving attendance was a high priority and they responded well to the support they received. Some of the support came from education welfare services, which used their enhanced role and higher status well, and from increased multi-agency involvement. Common strategies included calling homes on the first day of absence, parental contracts and taking legal action. While these legal sanctions sent an important message to the pupils and their parents, and acted as a useful deterrent, their effect on the most disengaged pupils was limited.

295 The survey also noted a continuing problem with differences between schools in the way that absences were authorised or recorded as unauthorised. For example, schools differed about when to mark a pupil as absent or late and in their authorisation of term-time holidays. A related issue was that schools did too little to ensure that pupils caught up with work they missed, with the onus resting too much on individual teachers. In some schools, too, the focus on improving the attendance of pupils who were in school for less than 90% of the time was seen by other pupils as condoning the absences of those just above this line. Some schools had addressed this directly by publishing the number of days or half-days missed.

Improving life chances: narrowing the gap continued

Behaviour

296 In autumn 2006, Ofsted published a report based on visits to schools in which behaviour had been judged unsatisfactory at the previous inspection (see xiv, p.99). Inspectors evaluated the progress which the schools had made in improving the pupils' conduct and attitudes to learning. The report told a positive story, showing that schools were able to reduce misbehaviour through simple methods applied consistently by all members of staff and strongly supported by the senior management team. Consistency was the key. Teachers knew what to do when confronted with unacceptable behaviour and it was made clear to everyone what the consequences of such behaviour would be. Support and mentoring were provided for the most troubled pupils, including those most at risk of permanent exclusion.

297 In the schools in which behaviour problems were being tackled successfully, whole-school improvement programmes focused on better teaching and an improved curriculum so that pupils became more engaged and motivated. Pupils were involved in developing improvement strategies and teachers recognised and rewarded good behaviour, as well as taking action on behaviour which was unsatisfactory.

298 A small-scale survey of those learning support units in schools not supported with Excellence in Cities additional funding showed that they were successful in improving the behaviour and attendance of their pupils and reducing exclusions (see viii, p.99). The most effective units paid close attention to improving pupils' literacy and developing alternative curricular programmes for pupils at Key Stage 4. They also provided high quality care, guidance and support, helping pupils to improve their attitudes to learning and attendance. Strong teaching was based on high levels of expertise and good management of behaviour; it was successful in engaging disaffected pupils.

299 While learning support units within the schools surveyed were usually effective and played an important part in the whole-school strategy to improve behaviour, reintegrating pupils in mainstream classes sometimes proved problematic. This was either because the pupils had not learned to cope or because mainstream teachers did not have the capacity to manage the return of the pupils effectively.

300 Ofsted's evaluation of the Secondary National Strategy pilot programme on social and emotional aspects of learning showed that the programme was most successful in schools in which leaders understood its underlying philosophy (see v, p.99). As a result of the programme in these schools, pupils worked better with one another and with staff. The greatest impact of the programme was on teachers' understanding of pupils' development and their management of interactions with pupils.

301 In the schools in the pilot which were less successful in improving behaviour, the main obstacles were high turnover of staff, leading to reliance on temporary teachers, and the absorption of key staff in other priorities. In schools in which the pilot programme was ineffective, it was merely an add-on to personal, social and health education or tutorial sessions.

Pupil referral units

302 In a survey of good and outstanding pupil referral units, local authorities and their partners were increasingly emphasising preventative action in fulfilling their duties (see xviii, p.99). Where such actions were well planned and resourced, they led to important benefits for children and young people. A sense of shared purpose and direction among staff was a key feature. Staff conveyed to pupils that they were offering a fresh start; they had high expectations for them, set them challenging tasks and anticipated what support they would need.

303 In all the pupil referral units in the sample, the curriculum had been designed to allow pupils to improve their basic skills where necessary, but also to re-engage them in learning through interesting experiences. For older pupils, often staying for over a year, accreditation and work-related learning were significant factors in motivation. All the units made sure that personal and social development was emphasised and integrated into all lessons and activities, as well as being taught directly in specific sessions. Personal development was generally monitored effectively, although academic progress was less so. The units worked well with local schools, the local authority and other agencies to provide an appropriate and well balanced curriculum. In particular, local authorities supported leaders and managers and contributed more widely to staff development.

304 Weaknesses were identified in pupil referral units in some local authorities. Often, children and young people stayed in units for an indefinite period with limited opportunities to reintegrate in mainstream schools. In too many cases, local authorities placed pupils who had statements of special educational need in pupil referral units which were unable to meet their special needs. Monitoring and evaluation of provision in units by the local authority were variable in quality and too often lacked the necessary focus on pupils' progress.

Colleges

305 In 2005/06, inspectors from Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate evaluated the quality of support for literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) in 29 colleges where good practice had been identified in previous inspections (see vi, p.99).

306 These colleges had reliable data to show the good success rates for learners who had received learning support. Many adults and young people who had failed at school were able to gain vocational or academic qualifications whilst improving their literacy, numeracy and/or language skills. Their support was based on a college-wide strategy; staff with expertise in literacy, numeracy, ESOL, key skills and learning support worked closely together. Initial assessments in literacy, numeracy and, where appropriate, language established learners' needs and programmes were then tailored accordingly. Learning support tutors worked closely with subject teachers to ensure that the development of skills was contextualised and made relevant. The effectiveness of the support was monitored carefully.

307 The availability and use of assessment information in colleges were often unsatisfactory and this impeded transition for learners between different settings. In most colleges there was limited understanding of different forms of assessment of learners' needs. There was also a lack of expertise in assessing learners' progress towards targets and their achievement on programmes which were not accredited. Other weaknesses included insufficient opportunities for learners preparing for employment to develop work-related skills or undertake vocational programmes.

308 In a few of the colleges, weaknesses were identified, arising mainly from a shortage of experienced and qualified tutors for literacy, numeracy and ESOL and where demand for such support had grown rapidly and recently. As a consequence, support was slow to arrive and of poor quality, with little or no monitoring of progress. In some colleges, this was ameliorated by staff development, but expertise was particularly lacking in ESOL.

Adult learning

309 For adults too, there were examples of high quality provision which provided a second opportunity to overcome barriers and to succeed in education. Participation in adult and community learning contributed significantly to improved life chances for many learners, who were able to develop skills as well as greater confidence. Providers focused increasingly on those most in need, including residents in areas of deprivation, people with learning difficulties or disabilities, those with mental health difficulties, Travellers, migrant workers and substance misusers. There was also much work through family learning to help parents take an active role in their children's education.

310 The better providers in schemes such as Workstep worked well with employers to understand disability and opened up opportunities for people with disabilities. Through the nextstep scheme, designed to help adults without a level 2 qualification, contractors provided advice and guidance that were well suited to the needs of specific client groups, thus helping them to move into learning and employment.

311 In adult and community learning, some personalised learning goals were too general or unchallenging. Although many providers had introduced a framework and provided guidance for tutors, this was not well understood by all, or always communicated to learners. A related issue was weak assessment, particularly in establishing learners' starting points and tracking their subsequent progress.

Improving life chances: narrowing the gap continued

312 A small-scale survey examined education in 19 prisons and found that in around a quarter it was unsatisfactory. Sometimes a concentration on individual support was misguided; learners may well have benefited more from attending sessions with their peers. A significant weakness was the lack of a coherent system for sharing information within prisons, between providers or across regions. Individual learning plans were not used well to provide a coherent learning experience for each learner. Information about learners' progress was not coordinated sufficiently and little of it was shared systematically between providers. Systems for recognising and recording learners' achievements were inconsistent and the transfer of information between prisons was generally ineffective.

Conclusion

313 Inspections in 2006/07 highlighted some significant strengths in practice that countered the effects of disadvantage. Successful practice was seen in a very wide range of contexts: early years settings; schools; pupil referral units; colleges; secure accommodation for young people; and adult prisons.

Too many children and young people do not gain enough from their time in school and fail to catch up thereafter.

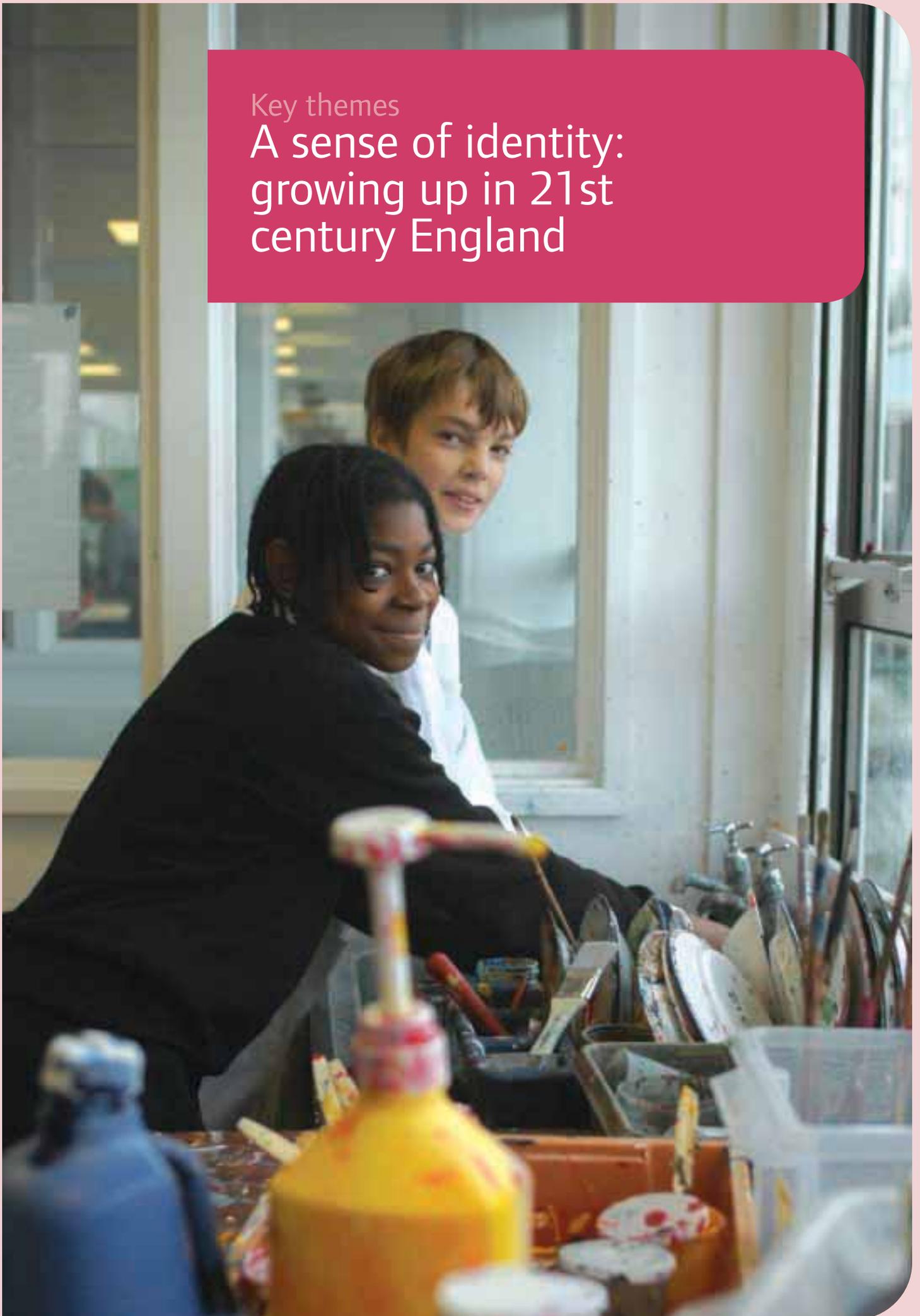
314 Fundamental to this successful practice were four factors:

- belief on the part of staff that all learners, whatever their circumstances, can and should achieve success
- accurate assessment of learning, combined with teaching that set clear and challenging objectives and used purposeful and engaging activities to reach them
- intelligent concentration on the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and the skills of effective communication and independent learning
- close personal support and guidance that engaged the learners and helped them to persevere with activities, see their purpose and gain benefit from them.

315 Very obviously, and very urgently, much more practice of this high quality is needed. Inspections, performance data and research continue to stress that too many children and young people do not gain enough from their time in school and fail to catch up thereafter, if they bother trying at all. Some attend so poorly that the experience of school is hopelessly fractured and muddled. Some are hindered, throughout their time in school and subsequently, by basic skills so inadequate that they cannot function effectively as learners, workers or citizens. Some may gain much from the fresh chance afforded by education in special units or in colleges, but they do so very late and after too much association with failure. These are the children and young people with whom Every Child Matters was most concerned and those for whom the idea of personalising learning should mean the most. Increasing their success must be a matter of the highest priority.

Key themes

A sense of identity:
growing up in 21st
century England



A sense of identity: growing up in 21st century England

Overview

- In effective early years settings, young children were developing well their understanding of the world and of their own and others' cultural traditions.
- Inspection of primary and secondary schools in 2006/07 found many examples of subject teaching and other activities which contributed positively to pupils' sense of personal, cultural and national identity, as well as to their understanding of local and wider issues. Except in the best schools, however, a coherent whole-school approach was generally lacking.
- Citizenship education in secondary schools showed further slow improvement, but continuing weaknesses included neglect of questions of national and regional identity and diversity, as well as failure to engage pupils well enough with important issues of the day.
- The quality of personal, social and health education has improved, but a lack of understanding of pupils' needs remains a problem in key areas such as education about drugs, sex and relationships.
- In history, concentration on only a few topics in depth contributed to pupils' weak appreciation of chronology and to a lack of understanding of the factors and events that have shaped present-day Britain. In geography, important global and environmental concerns were generally not identified clearly enough.
- At best, religious education contributed powerfully to pupils' personal and moral development, but, particularly in secondary schools, pupils were not learning enough about the challenges and controversy associated with religion in the modern world.
- In a survey of the views of 20,000 pupils, the majority believed that it was easy for them to make a difference to the way in which things were run in school.²⁸ In the best examples, there were opportunities for them to be involved in the making and implementation of school policies. However, their involvement in activities in the wider community was less common.

- Local authorities and their partners were committed to listening to children's and young people's views and involving them in decision-making about services, with youth teams in particular working hard to achieve this. Survey evidence of their views gave a generally positive account of what young people think about local services.

Introduction

316 Much has been said about the challenges faced by children and young people growing up in an increasingly diverse and rapidly changing society. Childcare settings, schools and colleges play a vital part in developing their knowledge and understanding of society and of social, moral and technological issues. This promotes their skills of enquiry and debate, and shows how they can make an active contribution to the life of their communities.

317 The *2020 vision* report made it clear that, as well as the vitally important literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, children need the confidence and ability to respond creatively to new experiences, challenges and opportunities; be resilient in the face of difficulty; investigate problems and find solutions; work collaboratively and independently; evaluate information; persevere; and manage their own learning.²⁹

318 This section focuses on the extent to which children's and young people's experience of education and care helps to prepare them to participate in society. Drawing on inspections in 2006/07, it explores two broad questions:

- What are the most effective ways of promoting an understanding about society for young children?
- How well do schools equip young people with knowledge and understanding of identity and diversity in local, national and global communities and with the skills to be active and confident citizens?

Developing knowledge and understanding of society in the early years

319 Inspections demonstrated that children attending early years settings generally built their self-confidence and all-round learning skills well. In effective settings, children learned to think about the feelings of others and to show care and respect for one another. They learned to negotiate, take turns and manage their own behaviour well. They also learned about diversity and how different people take responsible roles in society.

320 In these effective settings, young children were beginning to develop a sense of place and an understanding about the world in which they live. Where good use was made of stories, displays and visits, children were helped to appreciate the richness of the world around them. Inspectors found that in the best provision children learned about themselves, their local communities and the wider world; they behaved very well; they learned to recognise similarity and to value difference; and high quality relationships gave them a strong sense of belonging.

321 Skilled early years practitioners supported children's growing understanding of their own and others' cultural traditions through discussion, planned activities and celebrations. They used resources and activities to increase awareness of diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds. They avoided stereotyping and were prepared to challenge discrimination.

322 A very small proportion (1%) of early years settings was inadequate and did not meet the range of the children's needs. One common failing was that adults did not promote equality, or foster children's awareness of diversity and understanding of others.

Case study: good practice in children's cultural development

Children in this early years setting were provided with excellent opportunities and activities to learn to appreciate and value each other's similarities and differences. They were introduced to different people in the local neighbourhood and to the wider multicultural society. They freely chose from an extensive range of resources, which, among other things, illustrated cultural differences and provided positive images of disabilities. Resources included books, a variety of dolls, jigsaws and role play, as well as the celebration of festivals and special days. The children could see an excellent range of words written in different languages in books and pictures. They could also see posters of children with disabilities taking part in everyday play. They celebrated Diwali by hand painting, making clay divas and listening to the story of the festival. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was fostered by this positive approach.

Developing knowledge and understanding of society in schools

323 Subjects and other activities in schools can contribute positively in a range of ways to pupils' knowledge and understanding of society. Surveys in 2006/07 explored these contributions in detail. Ofsted published extended reports on five subjects that are at the core of pupils' understanding of themselves and their world: citizenship; personal, social and health education; history; geography; and religious education.

A sense of identity: growing up in 21st century England continued

Citizenship

324 Citizenship has been a statutory subject in secondary schools for five years, but there is still some way to go before ambitions for it are fulfilled. Ofsted's report *Towards consensus?* described continuing slow improvement (see xxiii, p.99). In the schools that were furthest forward, three in 10 of the sample, teaching programmes were well established and there were opportunities for genuine participation and responsible action in the school and community. Teachers in these schools had the specialist knowledge to lead discussion and stimulate debate about topical issues; they enabled independent learning and brought the strands of the subject together coherently. As a consequence, pupils demonstrated, to different degrees, good knowledge and understanding, competence in enquiry and communication and the capacity to take responsible action, for example by contributing to improvements in the school or community, fund raising or campaigning.

325 In the schools in which citizenship was well taught, a core programme was evident. In addition, teachers in related subject areas had considered the implications of citizenship for their curricula. This was particularly evident in a sharper focus on relevant and topical issues and in subject content that drew from or augmented learning in citizenship. For example, information and communication technology was sometimes combined successfully with citizenship education, enabling pupils to have direct contact with communities very different from their own. In one example, a city technology college was developing an e-citizenship course in which pupils linked with a South African township. They designed and used a website promoting pupils' voices and online feedback, met a member of parliament and were involved in the 'Make Poverty History' campaign.

326 However, much citizenship education remained uneven in quality and insufficiently focused on the need for pupils to engage with local, national and international questions. Some school leaders believed they were covering citizenship adequately, through the ethos of the school and through fostering positive pupil attitudes, and they were reluctant to develop provision for the subject further. Some aspects of knowledge and understanding about citizenship

were underplayed, and inspectors often found a lack of progression in the coverage of topics and concepts at a higher level.

327 An important aspect of the citizenship curriculum is learning about Britain's diversity. This aspect was weak in about half of the schools surveyed; these schools failed to address important questions about Britain in a rapidly changing world. This finding chimes with the conclusions of the recent report by a review group led by Sir Keith Ajegbo.³⁰

Personal, social and health education

328 In the majority of secondary schools, there was a strong link between citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE). However, there was sometimes a failure in curriculum planning to recognise that citizenship and PSHE have different objectives. In practice, the content of the two subjects was often confused and, where they were combined, there was often not enough time to cover topics in the depth needed to allow pupils to consolidate their understanding.

329 Nevertheless, pupils' knowledge and understanding of PSHE have improved over the last five years, as shown in the Ofsted report *Time for change?* (see xxii, p.99). Effective provision in schools ensured that pupils developed their knowledge and skills and had opportunities to reflect on their attitudes and values. In primary schools, role play and 'circle time' activities, in which pupils have opportunities to discuss matters of particular importance to them, were often effective. In secondary schools, the majority of which now have specialist teachers of PSHE, the overall achievement of pupils in PSHE was good or better.

330 Some significant issues remain, often related to the most problematic matters facing young people. Many pupils thought that they had not developed well enough the capacity to resist unwelcome peer pressure. Despite the efforts of schools to discuss issues about drugs, some teachers still lacked understanding of pupils' needs. For example, while many adults were concerned about young people's involvement with illegal drugs, the overwhelming majority of young people were much more concerned about alcohol and tobacco. Young people reported that many parents and teachers were not very good at talking to them about sensitive issues such as sexuality.

331 Discussions with pupils during inspections of PSHE gave insights into what they wanted from adults in relation to the topics covered by the subject: first, not to be treated as young adults too early; second, to have support and encouragement from parents and other members of the family to help them meet challenges; third, to have more help from schools to understand and respond to changes in their lives; and, finally, to have more time to work on important aspects of PSHE.

332 Teachers and governors had not always received sufficient help on how to deal successfully with these matters. The survey visits confirmed the continuing need for effective specialist teaching and support for pupils if education is to play its part in helping them deal with the dilemmas and pressures of adolescence.

History

333 Ofsted's report *History in the balance* addressed the issue of the relevance of history to young people and how it can help them to understand their society, their identity within it and the development of society to the present day (see xi, p.99). Although the report found much good practice in history teaching, the weaker areas were those that touch most closely on growing up in the 21st century. Many pupils studied a few topics in depth, at the expense of developing more of an overview and a secure sense of chronology. Too often pupils were not learning how factors and events connect with one another to form a narrative that explains Britain as it is today.

334 In the best primary schools, history gave pupils a critical knowledge of the past, but, overall, while pupils showed enthusiasm, their progress at Key Stage 2 was disappointing. Too many pupils in these years did not learn about important issues, such as how the United Kingdom was formed, the stories of the different cultures in our society and why Britain has fought in wars.

335 Pupils in secondary schools who achieved very well in history had a good knowledge of significant events, people and concepts; they could establish a chronology and an overarching narrative; they could seek out and evaluate evidence; they could pose relevant questions and form hypotheses; and they could communicate judgements effectively, using a range of media.

336 While some skills of the historian, such as using evidence, were generally well developed, the ability to understand interpretations of history remained an area of relative weakness. This ability, crucial to the study of history, is also relevant in other contexts where perspectives and viewpoints differ. Gaps were left when history teaching was not linked with citizenship. For example, discussion about extension of the vote or Britain's role in shaping the world was not generally developed to consider voting behaviour today, or what it means to be British at a time of diversity, migration, devolution and European Union expansion.



Key themes

A sense of identity: growing up in 21st century England continued

Geography

337 An Ofsted survey showed that the teaching of geography, too, was not doing all that it might to help young people understand the world in which they live and engage with issues which have an important impact on their lives, including the effects of human activity on the environment (see x, p.99).

338 In the schools where the teaching of geography was of high quality, pupils considered a range of issues from local to global. For example, they studied the notion of global interdependence from a variety of perspectives, including fair trade and the role of individuals in the world economy. By looking at trade in a particular commodity, such as bananas or chocolate, pupils understood how consumer choices affect people and environments around the world and developed an awareness of the complexity of international trade.

339 The idea of ‘global footprints’ was used effectively in some geography lessons to raise awareness about how people can damage or improve the environment, allowing pupils to measure their own use of resources and to consider the implications for their future well-being. In doing so, pupils learned that they can affect their local environment and influence the global environment. However, some key concepts of the global dimension, such as global citizenship, conflict resolution, diversity, human rights, interdependence, social justice, sustainable development, values and perceptions, were not overt enough in many geography schemes of work.

Case study: links with schools in other countries

Links developed through Comenius, a programme which supports school networks to strengthen the European dimension in education, enabled pupils in one school to widen their knowledge and understanding of life in Hungary and Portugal. Teachers visiting from Hungary and Portugal and exchanging materials with schools in those countries helped the children to understand other cultures in greater depth. These links prompted the pupils to design a tourist brochure for their area to send to their partner schools in Hungary and Portugal. In addition, they exchanged information with and visited a partner school in a different environment elsewhere in England in order to appreciate the diversity that is closer to home.

Religious education

340 The Ofsted report *Making sense of religion* reflected general improvement in the teaching of religious education (RE) (see xv, p.99). In particular, pupils in the schools visited understood better the significance of religion in people’s lives than has been the case in the past. However, too often, that understanding was still superficial. The report noted that the curriculum and teaching in RE did not place sufficient emphasis on exploring the changing political and social significance of religion in the modern world. As a result, the subject’s potential to contribute to community cohesion, education for diversity and citizenship was not being fully realised.

341 More work was needed on developing pupils’ knowledge of how people of different faiths understand citizenship, and about issues of belonging, coping with difference and respecting others’ beliefs and values. Too often, pupils did not learn enough about the differing impact of religious beliefs on communities; nor did they have enough opportunity to consider the challenges and tensions of belonging to a faith group in the contemporary world.

342 In the schools surveyed, the best practice in developing pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding, tackling discrimination and promoting community cohesion was found in the most ethnically diverse schools. The chief reason for this was the strong imperative to make these schools free of ethnic tensions. Several of these schools strongly emphasised the importance of good links with the broader community, for example by organising regular visits from community leaders to promote understanding and respect.

Links between the subjects

343 Taking these five reports together, it is clear that, in the most effective schools, the teaching of these subjects enabled children and young people to engage with and learn about important issues, including identity and culture. However, a more systematic approach to overall curriculum planning is needed in order to give pupils the knowledge and skills they require to understand more about identities and their development. More coherent planning of work across subjects is a priority for many schools.

Information and communication technology

344 New technologies are integral to the lives of many children and young people, in school and in their leisure time. Schools inspected were recognising that young people are making less use of traditional media in favour of online sources. Staff were using new technology with beneficial impact on pupils' attitudes to learning. However, links between scientific and technological subjects in the curriculum were underdeveloped and were too rarely made explicit to pupils.

345 There were examples of schools using information and communication technology to provide more personalised approaches to learning, some of which enabled young people to continue their learning in their own time at home. For example, a project in Wolverhampton, known as 'Learning2Go', used handheld computers to extend learning opportunities by providing multimedia content and a range of software to individual learners in any place and at any time. The staff and governors of one primary school in a challenging city area were placing greater emphasis on the use of information and communication technology in their

work with the local community. They were involved in a number of collaborative information and communication technology projects, including the effective use of personal digital assistants to enhance learning for gifted and talented pupils.

Making a positive contribution

346 There was widespread appreciation in schools and in local authorities of the importance of listening to the views of children and young people and providing them with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and to participate actively in the community. The voices of children and young people were increasingly important and more was being done in schools and other contexts to help them make a positive contribution.

347 The best early years settings were highly effective in three ways: by creating opportunities for children to learn about and contribute to their local communities; by helping children to participate in decision-making; and by establishing an inclusive approach for all children, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities. In this respect, most early years providers worked well with parents, regularly seeking their views and involving them to make sure that activities within the settings were consistent with, and complemented by, home routine.



Key themes

A sense of identity: growing up in 21st century England continued

348 What schools did to build pupils' capacity to contribute positively varied in its comprehensiveness and in the degree to which it was followed through. In the best cases, pupils were carefully involved in discussing issues of practical importance to them, including, for example, what happened at playtime. They also contributed through class and school forums to developing and monitoring school policies, for example on behaviour, rewards and the use of facilities. Pupils' views on the quality of school life, including lessons, were actively sought and valued as a standard feature of school self-evaluation. Pupils were given direct experience of involvement and responsibility, for example through running clubs, managing activities and events, or acting as monitors, prefects and visitor guides. There were also impressive examples of pupils working as mentors to younger children, as buddies to troubled peers, as mediators to resolve conflicts, as tutors of practical skills, or as ambassadors for the school. Pupils brought belief and commitment to these roles and the capacity shown, even by the youngest children, to carry off these roles with grace and self-discipline was often remarkable.

349 However, while good progress was being made in promoting productive participation, most chances for it stayed within the school. Opportunities for involvement in the wider community were too few and, where they occurred, they did not often extend to pupils with most to gain from the experience. Overall, pupils had too few means of engaging actively with local issues and, with their schools' support, showing initiative and taking on responsibility within their communities.

Involving children and young people at local level

350 As part of the evidence for joint area reviews of local services during 2005 and 2006, the views of children and young people were sampled by means of a questionnaire known as 'Tellus 1'. A clear majority of the pupils taking part in the survey rated their local areas highly, saying it was easy to find things to do, to become involved, to express their opinions and to make a difference in the way things were done at school. About half the respondents said it was easy to make their voices heard and to make a difference in the way things were run in the local area.

What children and young people think about local services

Of 20,000 pupils responding to the Tellus 1 survey:

- 69% rated the local area as good for children and young people
- 71% said they became involved in activities or events at school or the local community, or helped family or friends
- more boys (74%) than girls (67%) said they became involved, and more Black pupils (78%) than White pupils (70%) or Asian pupils (70%) said they did so
- 79% said it was easy to find things to do locally, such as good sports and leisure centres, good entertainments and parks, recreation areas or countryside – with more boys (83%) than girls (75%) saying it was easy
- 63% said it was easy to have a say in the way things were run at school, and 62% said it was easy to make a difference to the way things were run at school
- 48% said it was easy to have a say in the way things were run in the local area, and 50% said it was easy to make a difference to the way things were run in the local area
- more Asian pupils than other groups rated the local area highly, saying it was easy to find things to do, and that it was easy to make a difference to how things were run at school and locally.

351 Often inspired by developments arising from Every Child Matters, local authorities and their partners were doing much more than before to involve children and young people in consultation and decision-making.³¹ To achieve this, some local areas had new structures and initiatives and a more coherent strategy. Consultation events, such as conferences on the creation of the Children and Young People's Plan, were widespread, though not always yet routine. New structures included youth forums, councils and parliaments. Other innovations included the use of new communications technology to make consultation easier. There were good examples of involvement in community campaigns and challenges, with youth workers often taking the lead.

Case studies: participation by children and young people at a local level

'The Children and Young People's Plan was modified in the light of skilful consultation with young people, which included considerable involvement in a photographic competition around the borough and presentations from young people directly to cabinet members.' (Kensington and Chelsea)

'The framework of standards for involving and consulting children and young people provides an excellent structure for promoting young people's influence.' (Barnsley)

'The We're All Ears campaign, developed by young people themselves, was singularly successful in involving an exceptional 7,500 voters in elections for the Youth Parliament.' (Sunderland)

'The Youth Parliament gives young people very good access to key decision makers and leaders in the city.' (Kingston-upon-Hull)

'Young people are working with City Library staff to find ways of improving services offered.' (Newcastle upon Tyne)

352 These processes were beginning to show value. However, the successful involvement of vulnerable groups in consultation and decision-making was a strong feature in only a few areas. The Children's Commissioner's 'Shout – turn up the volume' Internet campaign invited children and young people to say how things could be made better for them, and a number of children looked after by local authorities took part in the regular consultations run by the Children's Rights Director. Awareness among youth workers of the need to engage young people whose circumstances make them harder to reach continued to be high. Examples of projects included the following: children with learning difficulties or disabilities produced a children's version of the Children's Fund Plan in Plymouth and, in Buckinghamshire, three looked after children participated in the council's Corporate Parenting Panel.

353 Youth participation bodies had had little impact on strategic decision-making across local authority areas. Organisations such as school councils and local youth forums rarely had well formed links with local elected representatives. Young people often commented that they had received little feedback on the impact of participation schemes and so did not know the results of their involvement.

354 That said, youth workers and other council officers continued to work hard to involve young people, so that their voices were heard in local community affairs and so that they could take part in useful community projects. Of benefit, too, were the less formal and less visible activities arranged by youth workers, through which young people cautiously, and sometimes apprehensively, took on small but responsible tasks, expressed their views and saw that they were valued. In a range of ways, youth workers invited young people to involve themselves, express a view and challenge an opinion, all with the clear intention of shifting decisions and direction towards them.

³¹ *Every Child Matters* (CM 5860), DFES, 2003; www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/publications.

Key themes

A sense of identity: growing up in 21st century England continued

Conclusion

355 Children and young people need knowledge, confidence and skills to develop as active and productive members of their communities and as well informed and responsible citizens of the wider world. Expectations of schools and early years settings are high.

356 Inspections in 2006/07 confirmed that effective early years settings did much to develop children's understanding, attitudes and behaviour. Surveys of practice in schools in the teaching of five subjects showed improvement in the contributions they made to pupils' knowledge and appreciation, but with continued unevenness in quality and some deficiencies in key respects. Improvement was slow in the case of citizenship. Productive links between the subjects remained limited.

357 There was improved practice in schools in gathering and responding to pupils' views and successful efforts to involve them in contributing positively to school life. More opportunities are needed outside school to promote pupils' engagement in community life.

358 Local authorities and their partners took more deliberate steps than before to engage with children and young people as users of local services and agents of their improvement. Local authority youth teams were often prominent in this work. However, more needs to be done to engage with these groups, as well as to make sure that, when young people are involved and consulted, they receive feedback and know how they have made a difference.



Children and young people need knowledge, confidence and skills to develop as active and productive members of their communities and as well informed and responsible citizens of the wider world.

Key themes

Working lives: developing skills for employment



Key themes

Working lives: developing skills for employment

Overview

- The commitment of providers to improving work-related learning and skills was evident in inspections of the different sectors in 2006/07, but their capacity to contribute to the transformation needed varied considerably, and the quality of provision was too often inconsistent.
- Work-related and enterprise learning in the secondary school curriculum was of mixed quality. There was a rise in the proportion of schools in which it was judged to be good or better and a positive response from pupils, but provision was inadequate in one in five schools. The extent to which work-related skills were developed in different subjects was uneven.
- Poor basic skills limited the achievement of too many learners at different stages. Weaknesses in literacy and numeracy hindered progress, and support to improve these skills was of variable quality.
- Many areas had effective 14–19 partnerships, which were able to provide an increasing range of vocational programmes. However, improvement was still needed in educational and training opportunities for young people in the 14–19 age range. Some inadequacies remained, notably in provision for young people with complex or severe learning difficulties and for those who fail to see continuing education and training as worthwhile.
- Although at an early stage in schools, work-related learning was well established in post-16 provision and its quality continued to improve, with nearly 95% of the providers inspected in 2006/07 judged satisfactory or better.
- There was continued improvement in the Young Apprenticeship Programme, with pupils' personal development, behaviour and motivation being clear strengths.
- The quality of provision for adult work-based learning was again better, but success rates remained too low and the availability and quality of literacy and numeracy support were too variable.
- Employers were too often not involved effectively in learning programmes because of their limited understanding of the qualifications framework and their lack of participation in reviews of learners' progress through the programmes.
- As a result of Train to Gain there was a substantial increase in the numbers of employers offering work-based learning. Achievement was good but there was often too much emphasis on the quickest routes to qualifications and not enough formal training was offered.
- Initiatives aimed at re-engaging the long-term unemployed and others who are disadvantaged had mixed success, with Employment Zones proving successful, Workstep provision improving and Prime Contract provision, which is in its early stages, still requiring development.
- Prison programmes to prepare offenders in making the transition to employment showed some good practice but their management was fragmented and they were often not well enough matched to specific needs.
- Post-16 vocational and work-based learning is increasingly complex; its management needs clarity of purpose, sound planning and effective communication. The provision inspected during 2006/07 still lacked coherence in some respects.

Introduction

359 Successive government policies have emphasised the importance of improving skills and employability in the United Kingdom. They have set unambiguous challenges and demanding targets for all concerned:

- to improve the level and transferability of the United Kingdom's skills base, including literacy and numeracy, fully engaging employers in this process
- to increase sustainable employment and provide clear opportunities for career progression
- to promote a learning culture in which the vocational and the academic are valued equally highly.

Providers across all education and training sectors can be in no doubt about their responsibility to contribute to this transformation. However, while the will is there, the capacity to contribute varies considerably, both within and between sectors.

360 This section looks at some of the areas critical to the process of preparing young people and adults for the workplace and raises a number of questions. How effectively are skills taught, in the classroom and the workplace, and are employers sufficiently involved in shaping the process? Are the arrangements for providing information, advice and guidance about work and learning opportunities equal to the Government's high expectations? Do society's most disadvantaged groups receive the support and guidance they need to increase their employability?

Developing vocational skills

361 Clearly, the better skilled and qualified the individual, the greater her or his chance of sustained and rewarding employment. Effective preparation for work requires a range of skills, both functional (ensuring an appropriate level of literacy, oracy and numeracy) and vocational (giving people the skills they need to do a particular job). It requires, too, that skills should be sufficiently broadly based to enable the individual to build on them and to transfer them as needed, between employers, between jobs and between levels of employment. Essential to this is sustained attention to improving learners' basic skills across all phases of learning.

Work-related and enterprise learning in schools

362 Recognition of the need to give a higher profile to vocational education in schools led, in 2004, to the mandatory inclusion of work-related and enterprise learning within the secondary school curriculum as a means of widening vocational opportunities for young people.

363 Ofsted's recent report on how well schools are handling this new requirement painted a mixed picture (see xxi, p.99). The survey provided evidence of improvement in the quality of the provision, with a rise from 40% to 50% in those organising good work-related learning. In one fifth of the schools visited, however, the quality of work-related provision was inadequate. Worryingly, in around one sixth of the schools surveyed, there was a perception that work-related learning was only for low attaining pupils and that including it in the range of qualifications offered might be disadvantageous in terms of the school's position in performance tables.

364 Pupils were extremely positive about the new curriculum and its contribution to the development of skills they considered important in the workplace. Over half the schools surveyed attributed pupils' improved attendance to the introduction of work-related learning and provided evidence of the re-engagement and improved behaviour of previously disaffected pupils.

365 A Key Stage 4 curriculum survey, and good practice surveys conducted jointly by Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate during 2006/07, showed that good provision for work-related learning has these features (see xxi and xix, p.99):

- clear links between what is learned in the classroom and experienced on placement
- awareness of the importance of teaching 'about', 'through' and 'for' work
- imaginative teaching based around real and relevant work-based examples
- a resource of wide ranging, high quality work placements
- a clear plan covering what is to be achieved on placements
- good industry and community links
- vocationally relevant enrichment activities, such as field trips and conferences
- clear progression routes offering a range of options.

Key themes

Working lives: developing skills for employment continued

366 Taken together, these features offer young people a breadth of experience on which to base their decisions about the future, as well as a head start with regard to any subsequent vocational training they may decide to undertake.

367 From the primary stage, pupils are able to learn work-related skills. In art, for example, they were developing creativity and teamworking skills through collaborative projects. Older pupils who studied modern foreign languages acquired vital skills for modern business, together with an awareness of the importance of other languages in the wider world. However, although generally aware of the importance of these subjects in promoting work-related skills, teachers rarely explained sufficiently clearly why such skills are important.

368 The potential for useful vocational input exists across the full range of subject areas in secondary schools. The impact of work-related learning is not as strong as it might be if links with all parts of the secondary curriculum were more overt and better explored. In survey inspections, design and technology stood out, providing good opportunities for the development of practical skills which were generally related well to the workplace. This success was due, in part at least, to the fact that a large number of design and technology teachers had previous industrial experience on which they drew effectively in their work with pupils. In other subject areas, however, there were isolated examples of good practice, rather than a sustained push towards vocational awareness.

369 Examples of innovation in linking mathematics to industry and to the national economy shone brightly when identified, but were rare. In geography, units of work on areas such as sport or retail encouraged pupils to explore issues about the working world. Many subject departments in schools, however, did not make sufficient use of topics with a work-related dimension.

Information, advice and guidance in secondary schools

370 Allied to the range of vocational opportunities on offer must be information and advice which give pupils clear and unbiased guidance about the range of opportunities available. Guidance and support for pupils were good or better in two thirds of the 155 secondary schools visited for the Key Stage 4 curriculum survey (see xxi, p.99) and inadequate in none. Despite this generally positive picture, there was not always sufficient support in literacy and numeracy for the pupils who needed it. Increased flexibility within the Key Stage 4 curriculum enables pupils to choose from a broader range of courses, while work-related learning has become a statutory requirement. All the schools gave appropriate time and attention to providing Year 9 pupils with the necessary guidance about making choices for Key Stage 4. There was good support overall for pupils with specific learning needs. During Key Stage 4, careers guidance was generally securely based, although there were gaps in the provision to prepare pupils for study in colleges after the age of 16.

Young apprenticeships

371 The Young Apprenticeship Programme was established in September 2004.³² Ofsted has evaluated the programme over a three-year period and has found continuing improvement. Areas for development identified in previous years have, in the main, been addressed successfully. The programme provides an effective alternative to the more traditional Key Stage 4 curriculum for the target group of middle and higher attainers. In half the partnerships inspected in 2006/07, achievement was good, and in all cases it was at least satisfactory. Young people's personal development, including their positive behaviour and high levels of motivation, has been a strength of the programme.

372 Teaching engaged the pupils, enabling them to develop their independent learning skills. More has been done to ensure that activities are linked to the qualifications sought. Work experience provision has improved and the required 50 days were in place in all but three of the partnerships inspected. Selection procedures were also better, as was the quality of information provided for pupils and their parents.

373 Overall the picture was an improving and positive one but some weaknesses remained among the providers inspected, including: inadequate use of Key Stage 3 assessment data and of individual learning plans; a lack of work set for pupils to complete between sessions; and weaknesses in the provision to enable them to develop key skills.

Working in partnership

374 As well as developing stronger links between the vocational and traditional elements of their curricula, schools and colleges are expected to work with a range of partners to give young people access to an increasing variety of vocational provision. The objectives of these 14–19 partnerships are to give clear progression routes from entry level to level 3, extend the range of work experience available to students from the age of 14 and increase participation in further education, employment and training.

375 Evidence from joint area reviews of services for children and young people carried out during 2006/07 indicated that the measures to achieve these objectives were at least satisfactory in nearly every local area inspected and good in a majority of them. However, improvement was still required to ensure the availability of good quality educational and training opportunities for all young people between the ages of 14 and 19. Some inadequacies remained, including insufficient provision in most partnerships for young people with complex or severe learning difficulties, and for children from families whose experience of, and attitudes to, continuing education and training are poor.



Key themes

Working lives: developing skills for employment continued

Adult learning and work-based learning for students post-16

376 While work-related learning in schools was still at an early stage, it was well established in post-16 provision and evidence suggests that its quality was continuing to improve. Almost 95% of the providers inspected in 2006/07 were judged satisfactory or better in their provision of work-related learning.

377 One of the sector's key strengths lies in the development of learners' practical skills, an asset recognised in successive reports of the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning and evident again across the range of sector subject areas in 2006/07.³³ Learners demonstrated a clear understanding of the requirements of the vocational settings in which they worked, performing work-related tasks with authority and confidence. Many also demonstrated greater self-esteem and improved their personal and social skills, including punctuality, teamwork and the ability to communicate clearly and confidently.

378 The importance to learners of time spent in the workplace, observing and learning from colleagues and becoming familiar with the rituals, rewards, demands and disciplines of the working environment, cannot be overestimated. In some cases learners gained skills through informal tuition from supervisors and colleagues and observation of the practice of others. However, they gained most when purposeful on-the-job learning was well coordinated with high quality off-the-job training. This allowed learners to tie in practical activities with the theory which underpins them and to develop transferable skills.

379 Colleges continued to demonstrate an improving awareness of the importance of providing a range of vocational learning opportunities and of preparing students for the workplace. A large majority of them offered good or better careers advice to full-time students, providing wide-ranging and accessible information and developing useful partnerships with Connexions and relevant specialist agencies. This structured support was, in some cases, less readily available to those attending classes outside the main college day.

380 College managers gave a higher priority than in previous years to work-related programmes and learners and reaped the benefits in improved success rates. Overall, however, too few work-based learners, whether based in colleges or other work-based learning provision, gained the accreditation which would allow them to use their skills fully and to progress. Apprenticeship framework completion rates for 2006/07, although showing an upward trend, remained far too low. Learning providers did not always translate high quality training into formal outcomes or persuade learners, or employers, that skills development was not just an end in itself but a stepping stone towards a useful qualification.

Case study: development of skills in work-based learning

A training provider in County Durham, which delivers literacy and numeracy training to local authorities and other customers, takes very effective steps to understand the employers it works with and provides learning opportunities which are relevant to the workplace.

'Right from the start we make sure that we understand the employer's business and that we meet all the key players such as operational managers, human resources managers, potential learners, and front-line supervisors. Providing literacy and numeracy training for adults can be very sensitive. From the outset we stress the high status and challenge of the qualifications we offer, the benefits to the employers' business, and how we will make the learning really relevant to the workplace. Our whole philosophy is to remove any 'back to school' fears. This means using vocationally relevant learning materials and helping managers and potential learners to foresee the benefits for themselves. We've found that previous learners and trade union learning representatives in particular can be tremendous role models and allies in encouraging participation right from the beginning.'

Building bridges: post-16 opportunities for disadvantaged learners

381 In all sectors of education there were concerns about the extent to which low achievement in basic skills formed a barrier to success among more disadvantaged groups of learners. For some people, a lack of confidence, ability or familiarity with regard to literacy, numeracy or spoken language is a major stumbling block to employment. One way of addressing this is through discrete provision in the form of skills for life training offered by colleges, learndirect and other providers. Success rates on these programmes were generally high. However, learning was often too narrowly focused on simply passing a test, rather than on the value of the learning process. Providers still offered insufficiently individualised learning packages. These concentrated on dealing with the gaps in learners' skills, rather than laying the secure foundations needed to support them effectively in employment and their personal lives.

382 The quality and availability of literacy and numeracy support for those on work-based learning programmes remained too variable, although providers showed increased awareness of their responsibility to identify and meet such needs. Examples of thorough and innovative practice, and of well planned support provided by qualified and experienced practitioners, were too rare. Too many providers still focused on working towards short-term targets rather than on making a clear link between learning and employment.

383 The Entry to Employment programme focuses on making the link between learning and employment; it seeks to engage young people aged 16–18 not already in work or learning by providing them with an individually tailored programme. In 2006/07, all the Entry to Employment providers inspected were judged satisfactory or better, and nearly 50% of Entry to Employment learners progressed into learning or employment, a proportion broadly in line with the Learning and Skills Council's target. Many of the learners accessing Entry to Employment faced significant, sometimes multiple, barriers to learning, and they received highly effective support. A majority of providers recognised the importance of familiarising young people with the workplace, using work tasting and work

experience effectively to help them develop confidence and employability skills. However, 30% of those inspected did not make the best of this opportunity, failing to forge or maintain productive links with employers.

384 Recruiting and retaining experienced tutors in literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages presented difficulties for providers. Although there were examples of good teaching of these basic skills, levels of expertise tended to vary.

Programme-led pathways

Programme-led pathways to apprenticeships can provide a useful alternative to the wholly employer-based route. Learners on programme-led pathways spend an initial period in a college or with a learning provider, gaining work-related and key skills, before moving into employment, where they complete their qualification framework.

Programme-led pathways are, potentially, a good alternative for learners not in employment who want to start an apprenticeship, or for less mature learners who feel unprepared for the disciplines of the workplace and want a structured and supportive lead-in to this aspect of their qualifications. The best providers of programme-led pathways offer this, making good use of enrichment activities to develop learners' confidence and work-related skills. The ready availability of literacy, numeracy and language support, and the potential for learners to work rapidly and productively towards key skills and technical certificates, gaining motivation from their success, are other advantages.

The real challenge comes, however, when it is time to move learners into employment, and this has been problematic in some cases. The Adult Learning Inspectorate survey of programme-led pathways found that some providers were experiencing difficulty in finding timely employment for their learners. They were, in the worst cases, allowing learners to complete their framework in less than a year, with insufficient work-based assessment, no period of employment, little work experience and, crucially, no job at the end of it. This defeated the object of what is, essentially, a work-based qualification.³⁴

³⁴ *Which way now for PLPs?*, Talisman supplement, Adult Learning Inspectorate, August 2006.

Key themes

Working lives: developing skills for employment continued

Employer engagement

385 The importance of effective partnerships in provision for vocational and work-based learning has already been highlighted. Employers' active and informed participation in learning programmes at all levels is a critical factor in the drive to improve skills and employability. Providers of adult and work-based learning inspected in 2006/07 were familiar with the challenge of ensuring that employers fully understood and played a meaningful part in learning programmes.

386 Employers' limited understanding of the qualifications framework, and their lack of input into reviews of learners' progress, too often prevented their effective involvement. Despite some instances of frequent and effective communication, examples of employers and providers working as equal partners to deliver a truly coherent learning programme were unusual.

Case study: a coherent approach to linking with employers

The training provider plans strategies jointly with employers to provide programmes leading to national qualifications, promoting these well by using good quality marketing materials and promotional events. Staff from the provider meet employees and provide effective advice and guidance to enable them to make informed decisions before joining programmes. Once programmes are under way, they hold monthly meetings with employers, during which learners' progress is monitored and programmes are reviewed. The provider responds well to employers' requirements and adjusts and develops programmes to meet company aims. Employers value the effective information and education provided by the training provider.

Train to Gain

387 The period 2006/07 saw a substantial increase in the number of employers offering work-based learning programmes. Employers were attracted largely by Train to Gain, which was introduced following a pilot programme in 2004. This initiative focused on their needs.

388 Train to Gain shifted the emphasis on work-based learning from a supply-led to a demand-led approach in which employers identify areas of skills shortage. They access training, which is subsidised for employees without a level 2 qualification, commissioning it either through a skills broker or direct from a learning provider. The advantages of this approach were evident in success rates significantly higher than in other areas of publicly funded work-based learning, and in a very positive response from employers. They valued both the availability of subsidised training and the help of skills brokers in steering them through unfamiliar and complex funding issues.

389 One clear benefit of Train to Gain is the opportunity it affords employed adults to gain qualifications – for many, the first such opportunity they have had in many years, and a significant boost to their confidence. However, there was insufficient challenge by providers and skills brokers to employers to encourage them to offer the best possible experience for their learners. Neither skills brokers nor providers made enough effort to explain to employers the importance of giving their employees access to high quality information, advice and guidance.

390 Brokers rarely carried out a sufficiently detailed analysis of the skills needs of the employers with whom they were working, failing to identify the existing skills amongst the workforce or the new skills which were needed. Learning was often insufficiently individualised and the choice of programmes available to each learner too limited. One of the initiative's aims, which is to engage employers who have previously not shown an interest in government-funded training, has not yet been achieved. Most of the employers involved were those who were previously known to brokers or to the training providers with whom they contracted.

391 Given that its primary purpose is to raise people's skills, too often insufficient formal training was provided through the Train to Gain route. There was also an over-emphasis on the accreditation of learners' existing skills. Employers tended to direct learners towards the quickest routes to a qualification, selecting optional units which required the minimum of new learning, rather than encouraging learners to undertake more challenging but ultimately more beneficial options.

Case study: individualised learning supported through a Train to Gain programme

This provider is a company which plans each learner's programme in great detail. Learning plans recognise the skills learners already have and underpin training in new activities which will help them at work.

The company noted that adults almost always have a really good background in some parts of the qualification and usually already meet some of the competence requirements, particularly where there are many different course units to choose from. It pointed out that, while the easy option for a training provider is just to assess adults for these units so that they prove their competence and achieve the qualification, taking this easy route is usually not the best choice. Both the employer and the learner can be left feeling short-changed.

Depending on the circumstances for each employer and learner, the company tries to arrange things so that learners get rapid assessment and accreditation of prior learning for some units at which they are already competent; but it also encourages them to choose units and modules with which they are less familiar. The provider then plans the training needed for these new units and assessment follows. This develops new skills and a more flexible workforce.

Reaching disadvantaged and disengaged people

392 Crucial to improving skills and employability is success in re-engaging disadvantaged and disaffected people in learning or work. An indication of the extent to which this has not yet been achieved is the fact that 30% of 19-year-old care leavers are not in education, training or employment; this is over twice the proportion of young people in general.

393 People who have been out of work for a long time and who are then accessing employability programmes are among the hardest to support; many are participating in these programmes for the second or third time, after failing to get, or stay, in a job. Low job outcomes were achieved within the new Prime Contract provision funded by the Department for Work and Pensions – on average, only 20%. The gulf between this figure and the 40–45% target remains significant.

394 Inspectors found many examples of highly effective work with individual participants. Unsurprisingly, the most successful tutors were those who demonstrated high expectations of participants; developed a supportive yet forthright relationship with them, listening to and respecting their aspirations whilst challenging any lack of realism; and developed clear, focused individual action plans which provided the foundation not just for participants' re-entry to the labour market but also for their long-term employment. However, prime contractors tended to set their sub-contractors insufficiently clear or challenging targets and failed to ensure that effective practice was the rule rather than the exception.

Key themes

Working lives: developing skills for employment continued

395 Employment Zones were particularly effective in getting long-term unemployed participants into work, with success rates approaching 60% in some cases.³⁵ Unlike prime contractors, Employment Zone providers were well established; they had at their disposal considerable financial resources and significant discretion as to how these could be used. Inspections identified some noteworthy examples of positive interventions, with participants being given the funds to set up in business, to relocate in England, or to travel abroad. However, providers are not required to track participants' destinations in the long term, so the extent to which their success was sustained could not be judged.

396 Workstep providers have travelled a long and often challenging road in recent years. Adequacy rates improved from below 50% in 2004/05 to nearly 90% in 2006/07. The best Workstep providers were very much 'can-do' organisations; they were highly knowledgeable in their field, able to take a measured view of participants' needs and to offer structured, innovative and well focused support. The factors which contributed to a rise in the number of participants progressing into unsupported employment included: the setting of challenging targets, both corporate and individual; the use of regular, well managed meetings to review individual participants' progress; and providers' increased understanding of the requirements and impact of quality improvement.

397 The better providers worked effectively with employers to improve their understanding of the needs of disabled people in the workplace and of how simple adaptations and minor changes to working practices can open up employment opportunities to people with a range of disabilities. They helped participants develop transferable, work-related skills and made effective use of job coaches to work alongside individual participants at the beginning of their unsupported employment. These coaches assisted participants in the development of job-specific skills and helped employers make the required modifications to their practices.

Re-engaging offenders

398 In prisons, learning and skills services, enabling offenders to develop new skills and obtain purposeful and rewarding employment, are increasingly seen as critical to the prevention of reoffending.³⁶ For most offenders, making the transition from prison back into the community and entering and sustaining employment represent a major challenge.



399 Inspections of prison education in 2006/07 found examples of good practice. Individual prison staff worked productively with offenders. There were good local prison initiatives to engage employers in supporting the development of offenders' vocational skills inside prison, and in providing opportunities for them on the outside. Overall, however, there was a lack of cohesion which prevented the system from operating effectively.

400 There were differences in the priority given to learning and skills by individual prisons.³⁷ The responsibilities of the head of learning and skills in each prison varied widely between regions and prisons, and in many cases their precise roles remained unclear, hindering their ability to make improvements. The scope of learning provision in most prisons was satisfactory and in many cases it had been extended to include more employability skills training.

401 There were some very good examples of practical teaching which enabled learners to develop good skills appropriate to industry. However, too few offenders were aware of the range of educational and vocational programmes open to them. There was not enough personalisation of learning. This meant that, in some cases, the requirements of people from specific groups – such as women, young offenders and those with particularly long or short sentences – were not adequately met.

402 In the best examples, offenders undertook, while in prison, work-related training which included experience in the workplace. This offered undeniable benefits in the development of job-related and personal skills; in addition, it brought the guarantee of permanent or part-time work on release. In too many cases, however, the unpaid work undertaken by prisoners during their sentences lacked structured training and was insufficiently linked to their needs or aspirations. While it offered offenders the chance of making a contribution to the community, it did little to enhance their prospects of employment.

Case study: employer engagement with offenders

At one prison, staff established a particularly good range of partnership initiatives with local employers as part of the resettlement to work programme. Offenders on this scheme – some in paid work, others in unpaid voluntary and community project work – were highly motivated and appreciated the opportunity to work in the community. They developed good employability skills. Several progressed to positions of greater responsibility. For example, one offender in construction work, having started as a labourer, became the firm's on-site manager for groundwork contracts. Another offender involved in unpaid voluntary work at a recycling company was promoted to paid work as a van driver. Progression into jobs for offenders on the resettlement to work scheme was higher than for other offenders. Three quarters of those employed on the scheme continued in the same employment after leaving the prison, compared with 45% of all offenders released during the same period.

403 Aware of the importance of the engagement of sympathetic employers, the prison service has sought to establish links with large business organisations; in many areas this has been successful. Critically, however, there has been too little emphasis on the role of small- and medium-sized employers in the drive to reduce reoffending. As a group, these employers provide about half the jobs in the United Kingdom. However, a survey undertaken by the Adult Learning Inspectorate in 2006 found that many such employers were unaware of the Government's drive to reduce reoffending and still fewer of the part they might play in it.³⁸ Some said that they would prefer not to employ ex-offenders, although those who had done so were very positive about the experience.

³⁷ In 2006, the funding and contracting of prison learning passed from the Offender Learning and Skills Unit to the Learning and Skills Council, with the aim of improving coherence and bringing together the education and vocational elements of the service.

³⁸ *Talisman*, Adult Learning Inspectorate, October 2006.

Key themes

Working lives: developing skills for employment continued

Case study: social and life skills as part of resettlement

One prison offered a wide range of well run social and life skills courses, linked closely to the offending behaviour and resettlement needs of the offenders. Courses included budgeting and money management, preparation for work, diversity, citizenship, and alcohol and drug awareness. Learners developed good self-awareness and a better understanding of the consequences of their actions. They learned appropriate techniques to manage their behaviour. One course on fatherhood was particularly effective in raising awareness of parental responsibility and child development. Tutors used a very good range of techniques, including role-play and drama, to build confidence and self-esteem.

National information, advice and guidance services

404 There has been an increasing emphasis over recent years on the value of high quality information, advice and guidance in the development of a skilled and qualified workforce. There is recognition of their importance in ensuring that individuals and groups understand the learning and employment options open to them and have the support they need to access these. The Connexions service, for young people, nextstep, for those over the age of 19, and the learndirect helpline, all build on the entitlement to vocational guidance implicit in the 14–19 curriculum and on adult and work-based learning programmes. They do this by making information, advice and guidance readily available, and by focusing on the disadvantaged and learners whose circumstances make them difficult to reach.

405 The vast majority of the nextstep contractors inspected recognised and met their responsibility to provide a client-focused service, making learning and employment-related information, advice and guidance accessible to a geographically wide and socially diverse range of communities and local priority groups. The more successful demonstrated a clear understanding of their key purpose – to assist clients without a level 2 qualification into learning or employment. Often, skilled and experienced advisers worked very effectively with clients, assessing their needs, building their confidence, and exploring barriers to work or learning and how these might be overcome.

406 While most contractors recognised the need to make tangible improvements to their clients' lives, in practice some continued to judge their own performance more in terms of the number of clients they saw rather than the proportion of the clients that went on to achieve positive outcomes in learning or work. About 50% of advice sessions led to positive outcomes and, whilst this exceeded the national Learning and Skills Council's target of 45%, there is some way to go before the nextstep service plays the fullest possible part in meeting the Government's high expectations.



Coherence in provision for post-16 vocational and work-based learning

407 Provision for post-16 vocational and work-based learning is increasingly complex. Enhancing the United Kingdom's skills base and ensuring that people right across society are fully prepared for useful and rewarding employment requires clarity of purpose, effective communication, sound planning and good management. Awareness of this is reflected in the reforms currently in train across different remits: the planned reorganisation of youth and adult information, advice and guidance services; the recent transfer of responsibility for prison learning and skills from the Offender Learning and Skills Unit to the Learning and Skills Council; and the streamlining of contracts for the Department for Work and Pensions.

408 However, provision inspected in 2006/07 still lacked coherence in some respects. Although there were some good examples of collaboration between schools and work-based learning providers, these remained exceptions rather than the norm. Links between training contexts were not clear enough. For example, there was no direct route by which a participant on an employability programme funded by the Department for Work and Pensions could move into Train to Gain.

409 Further, despite the involvement of employers in Sector Skills Councils, there was a mismatch in some vocational areas between the programmes offered and the needs of industry.

410 In leisure, travel and tourism, employers in both the sport and recreation and travel and tourism industries were developing their own programmes or buying commercial courses, rather than using existing government-funded qualifications, the content of which did not meet their needs. The resulting decline in the number of work-based learning programmes on offer left learners either having to rely on an employer to fund them through a commercial training course or paying for it themselves. Meanwhile, in hospitality, opportunities for learners to develop skills at level 3 continued to reduce, with the threat of a future skills shortage.

Conclusion

411 The effective development of work-related skills is crucial to the well-being of individuals and the strength of the economy. The inspections in 2006/07 that focused on preparation for working life across the sectors presented an uneven picture of quality and effectiveness.

412 Overall, there was improvement, notably in the quality of post-16 and adult work-based learning. But much remains to be done to make sure that work-related learning in secondary schools is of high value to all young people. Success rates in some post-16 and adult work-based programmes continued to be too low. Crucially, despite new schemes and providers' efforts, the quality and effectiveness of what was available to disadvantaged groups often remained inadequate. While 14–19 partnerships were of growing benefit in creating more opportunities for vocational learning, they were not always adding value for these disadvantaged groups. Schemes and other support for the long-term unemployed and offenders met with varying success. Improving the basic skills of different groups of learners remained a key issue in all sectors.

413 More generally, in what is an increasingly complex landscape, better coordination of vocational and work-based programmes, fuller engagement of employers and well targeted guidance for learners continue to be of paramount importance in matching provision to need and ensuring its greater effectiveness and value.

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Bibliography and annexes

Annex 1. Definitions

Table 1: Inspection frameworks

Type of inspection	Framework	Effective since	Legislation
Childcare and nursery education in registered childcare provision	Inspecting outcomes: inspections of childcare and, where applicable, funded nursery education in registered provision	April 2005	Section 79 of the Children Act 1989 as inserted by the Care Standards Act 2000 and as further amended by the Children Act 2004 and the Education Act 2005; and section 122 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended by the Education Act 2005
Maintained schools	Every Child Matters: framework for inspection of schools in England	September 2005	Section 5 of the Education Act 2005
Independent schools	Framework for inspecting independent schools	September 2003	Section 162(a) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005
Post-16 education and training	Common Inspection Framework for inspecting education and training	September 2005	Sections 60–64 and 69–71 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000
Adult learning	Common Inspection Framework for inspecting education and training	April 2005	The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (123–126) Employment and Training Act 1973
Initial teacher training	Framework for the inspection of initial training for the award of qualified teacher status 2005–11	September 2005	Section 18A of the Education Act 1994 as inserted by the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998

Annex 1. Definitions continued

Table 1: Inspection frameworks continued

Type of inspection	Framework	Effective since	Legislation
Children’s social care	‘Inspecting for better lives’ is the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) framework, adapted by Ofsted for inspections of social care provision on the transfer of work from CSCI	April 2007	Sections 80 and 87 of the Children Act 1989. Sections 31, 45 and 105 of the Care Standards Act 2000. Sections 146, 147 and 148 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass)	Inspecting and reporting on the performance by Cafcass and the officers of the service, and of their functions	April 2001	Courts Act 2003 at Section 59(1)
Local authority children’s services	Every Child Matters: framework for the inspection of children’s services	September 2005	Sections 20–24 of the Children Act 2004

Inspection judgements

Inspectors make judgements about pupils’/students’ achievements and the quality of educational provision using a four-point scale:

Grade 1 Outstanding

Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Satisfactory

Grade 4 Inadequate

Use of proportions in this report

Proportions are used when sample sizes are large and are expressed in a number of ways: percentages, common fractions and general descriptions such as ‘majority’, ‘minority’ or ‘most’. Where general descriptions are used, they relate broadly to percentages as shown in Table 2.

If sample sizes are small – generally fewer than 100 – scale is expressed using actual numbers of institutions to which particular judgements apply.

Table 2: Expressions of proportions in words in this report

Proportion	Description
97–100%	Vast/overwhelming majority or almost all
80–96%	Very large majority, most
65–79%	Large majority
51–64%	Majority
35–49%	Minority
20–34%	Small minority
4–19%	Very small minority, few
0–3%	Almost none, very few

Ofsted’s powers to investigate parental complaints

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives Ofsted new powers to investigate complaints by registered parents and carers about their child’s school. The powers relate to whole-school issues such as when:

- the school is not providing a good enough education
- the pupils are not achieving as much as they should, or their needs are not being met
- the school is not well led and managed, or is not using its resources efficiently
- the pupils’ personal development and well-being are being neglected.

However, Ofsted’s new remit does not include complaints about:

- admissions policy
- exclusions of individual pupils
- provision for individual pupils with special educational needs
- temporary exceptions to the curriculum.

Ofsted does not:

- investigate incidents that are alleged to have taken place
- judge how well a school investigated or responded to a complaint
- mediate between parents or carers and schools to resolve disputes.

More detailed information for parents/carers about making complaints can be found on Ofsted’s website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex 1. Definitions continued

Joint area reviews

Ofsted undertakes joint area reviews in partnership with the following inspectorates:

- the Adult Learning Inspectorate³⁹
- the Audit Commission
- the Commission for Social Care Inspection⁴⁰
- the Healthcare Commission

- HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
- HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
- HM Inspectorate of Court Administration⁴¹
- HM Inspectorate of Prisons
- HM Inspectorate of Probation.

Inspectors carrying out joint area reviews make judgements on the basis of a common grading scale set out in Table 3.

Table 3: Common grading scale for joint area reviews and annual performance assessments

Grade	Descriptor
Grade 4: Outstanding	A service that delivers well above minimum requirements for children and young people, is innovative and cost-effective and fully contributes to raising expectations and the achievement of wider outcomes for the community
Grade 3: Good	A service that consistently delivers above minimum requirements for children and young people, has some innovative practice and is increasingly cost-effective whilst making contributions to wider outcomes for the community
Grade 2: Adequate	A service that delivers minimum requirements for children and young people, but is not demonstrably cost-effective nor contributes significantly to wider outcomes for the community
Grade 1: Inadequate	A service that does not deliver minimum requirements for children and young people, is not cost-effective and makes little or no contribution to wider outcomes for the community

Annual performance assessments

Annual performance assessments of local services are conducted each year. For further details, see paragraphs 225 and 226.

104 ³⁹ Became part of the new Ofsted on 1 April 2007.

⁴⁰ From 1 April 2007, responsibility for children's social care became part of the remit of the new Ofsted.

⁴¹ Became part of the new Ofsted on 1 April 2007.

Annex 2. Inspection evidence

Table 4: Number of inspections⁴²

	Period covered	Number of inspections
Childcare and nursery education		
Day care	1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007	11,200
Childminder	1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007	16,000
Total		27,200
Maintained schools and pupil referral units		
Nursery schools	September 2006 to 25 May 2007	121
Primary schools	September 2006 to 25 May 2007	5,151
Secondary schools without sixth forms	September 2006 to 25 May 2007	524
Secondary schools with sixth forms	September 2006 to 25 May 2007	610
Academies	September 2006 to 25 May 2007	8
Special schools	September 2006 to 25 May 2007	320
Pupil referral units	September 2006 to 25 May 2007	114
Total		6,848
Colleges of further education		
General further education, tertiary and agricultural and horticultural colleges	September 2006 to July 2007	84
Sixth form colleges	September 2006 to July 2007	16
Independent specialist colleges	September 2006 to July 2007	16
Total		116
Non-association independent schools		
S162A inspections	September 2006 to July 2007	357
Schools wishing to register	September 2006 to July 2007	174
Material change visits	September 2006 to July 2007	17
Unannounced emergency visits	September 2006 to July 2007	24
Total		572

⁴² These were the inspections for which Ofsted held data by July 2007.

Annex 2. Inspection evidence continued**Table 4:** Number of inspections continued

	Period covered	Number of inspections
Other inspections		
Joint area reviews of children's services in local authorities	September 2006 to June 2007	49
Secure settings for young people, including secure children's homes, young offender institutions and secure training centres	September 2006 to June 2007	17
Initial teacher training	September 2006 to July 2007	84
Children's social care: full inspections	1 April to 30 June 2007	398
Children's social care: interim inspections	1 April to 30 June 2007	417
Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass)	1 April to 30 June 2007	1
Adult learning (full inspections)	1 July 2006 to 31 March 2007	193
	1 April to 30 June 2007	53
Adult learning (reinspections)	1 July 2006 to 31 March 2007	65
	1 April to 30 June 2007	12

Bibliography and annexes

Annex 3. Other analyses

Inspection results by school phase^{43,44}

Table 5: Primary schools

Aspects of the school	Percentage of schools			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness				
How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	13	48	34	5
Achievement and standards				
How well do learners achieve?	12	48	35	5
Personal development and well-being				
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	31	59	10	0
The quality of provision				
How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	11	51	35	3
Leadership and management				
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	14	50	33	3

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

⁴³ Main inspection judgements include the results of phase 2 reduced tariff inspections; lower level judgements are only made during full inspections and phase 1 reduced tariff inspections.

⁴⁴ These are the inspections for which Ofsted held data by July 2007.

Annex 3. Other analyses continued

Table 6: Secondary schools^{45,46}

Aspects of the school	Percentage of schools			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness				
How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	13	38	39	10
Achievement and standards				
How well do learners achieve?	12	39	40	9
Personal development and well-being				
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	24	47	28	1
The quality of provision				
How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	8	44	43	5
Leadership and management				
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	17	45	35	3

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Table 7: Special schools⁴⁷

Aspects of the school	Percentage of schools			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness				
How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	22	58	16	4
Achievement and standards				
How well do learners achieve?	19	61	17	3
Personal development and well-being				
How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	46	45	6	3
The quality of provision				
How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	18	62	17	3
Leadership and management				
How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	24	57	16	3

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

⁴⁷ Final figures for all inspections in 2006/07 will be available on the Annual Report microsite.

Annex 3. Other analyses continued

Schools causing concern

Table 8: Numbers and proportions of schools in different categories of concern at 31 August 2007

		Primary		Secondary		Special		PRU		Total	
		05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07
Special measures	No.	137	181	54	47	6	9	11	9	208	246
	%	0.8	1.0	1.6	1.4	0.7	0.8	2.2	2.0	0.9	1.1
Notice to improve	No.	205	203	93	86	3	7	11	10	312	306
	%	1.2	1.2	2.8	2.5	0.3	0.6	2.2	2.2	1.4	1.4
Serious weaknesses⁴⁸	No.	86	11	21	–	7	–	3	–	117	11
	%	0.5	0.0	0.6	–	0.7	–	0.6	–	0.5	0.0
Underachieving schools⁴⁹	No.	8	2	6	–	–	–	–	–	14	2
	%	0.0	0.0	0.2	–	–	–	–	–	0.1	0.0
Inadequate sixth forms⁵⁰	No.	n/a	n/a	3	–	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	3	–
	%	n/a	n/a	0.1	–	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0.1	–

PRU = pupil referral unit.

110 ⁴⁸ From September 2005, this category was no longer in use.

⁴⁹ From September 2005, this category was no longer in use.

⁵⁰ From September 2005, this category was no longer in use.

Table 9: Numbers of schools placed in, and removed from, each of the categories of concern in inspections in 2006/07, and those that closed while in these categories at 31 August 2007

		Primary		Secondary		Special		PRU		Total	
		05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07	05/06	06/07
Special measures (SM)	In	117	137	32	30	2	11	13	7	164	185
	Out	90	83	65	35	13	6	7	6	175	130
	Closed (while in SM)	13	10	3	2	4	2	3	3	23	17
Notice to improve (Ntl)	In	207	175	96	76	3	5	11	9	317	265
	Out	–	179	–	87	–	1	–	9	–	276
	Closed (while in Ntl)	2	1	3	6	–	–	–	–	5	7
Serious weaknesses (SW)	In	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Out	125	75	22	21	11	7	5	3	163	106
	Closed (while in SW)	2	–	2	–	–	–	–	–	4	–
Under-achieving schools	In	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Out	30	6	5	6	–	–	–	–	35	12
	Closed	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Inadequate sixth forms	In	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Out	n/a	n/a	2	3	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	3
	Closed	n/a	n/a	–	–	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	–	–

PRU = pupil referral unit.

Annex 3. Other analyses continued

Children's social care

Table 10: Outcomes for social care inspections (1 April to 30 June 2007)⁵¹

Number of inspections	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate – Notice of action to improve	Inadequate – Enforcement action	Total
Children's homes (full inspections)	24	164	104	53	2	347
Children's homes (interim inspections)	21	195	160	39	1	416
Fostering ⁵²	1	12	9	3	0	25
Adoption ⁵³	0	0	1	3	0	4
Other ⁵⁴	3	10	7	3	0	23
All providers	49	381	281	101	3	815

112 ⁵¹ Inspections include only those where the inspection fell within the reporting period and the inspection report has been issued.

⁵² Includes inspections of independent fostering agencies, local authority fostering agencies and private fostering arrangements.

⁵³ Includes inspections of voluntary adoption agencies and local authority adoption agencies.

⁵⁴ Includes inspections of boarding schools, residential family centres and residential special schools.



Annex 4. Glossary

This list is not intended to be exhaustive but rather to provide definitions or explanations of some of the key terms that are used in the Annual Report and which may be unfamiliar to readers.

Term	Definition or explanation
Childcare and early learning	
Ofsted registers the following types of childcare:	
Childminding	This is provision that takes place on domestic premises for a total of more than two hours a day, except where the care is provided only between 6pm and 2am.
Full day care	This provision includes nurseries and children's centres and provides care for a continuous period of four hours or more. It includes private nursery schools for children under the age of five that have a distinctive educational emphasis and are overseen by a qualified teacher, but excludes those that are maintained by a local authority or form part of an independent school.
Sessional day care	This is provision for children attending part time for no more than five sessions a week, each session being less than a continuous period of four hours in any day.
Out of school care	This provides for children aged three and over and operates before or after school or during the school holidays.
Crèches	Crèches provide occasional care on particular premises for more than two hours a day.
Multiple day care	This provides more than one type of day care at the premises.
Other terms used in the 'Childcare and early education' section of this report	
Early education	In this report, early education refers specifically and only to government-funded early education. Ofsted inspects all settings in receipt of government funding to deliver free early years education for children aged three and four. These settings are required to provide the Foundation Stage curriculum, which focuses on the distinct needs of children aged three until the end of the reception year of primary school.
Early education funding	Early education funding is available where settings are included in a local authority directory of provision of free early education places for children aged three and four. See <i>Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage</i> , Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2000; available from www.qca.org.uk .
Early learning goals	The early learning goals establish the expectations of what most children will achieve by the end of the Foundation Stage.

Term	Definition or explanation
Every Child Matters	<p>The government Green Paper <i>Every Child Matters</i> (2003) set out a programme based upon the following five outcomes for children and young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ being healthy ■ staying safe ■ enjoying and achieving ■ making a positive contribution ■ achieving economic well-being.
Registration of providers under the Children Act 1989	<p>Section 79A of part XA of the Children Act 1989 (as inserted by the Care Standards Act 2000) requires that all care of children aged under eight years for over two hours a day, over more than five days a year, by adults who are not relatives, must be registered.</p>
Six areas of learning	<p>The Foundation Stage curriculum is organised into the following six areas of learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ personal, social and emotional development ■ communication, language and literacy ■ mathematical development ■ knowledge and understanding of the world ■ physical development ■ creative development.
Maintained schools	
Core subjects	<p>These are the three core subjects of the National Curriculum: English, mathematics and science.</p>
Every Child Matters	<p>The government Green Paper <i>Every Child Matters</i> (2003) set out a programme based on the following five outcomes for children and young people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ being healthy ■ staying safe ■ enjoying and achieving ■ making a positive contribution ■ achieving economic well-being.

Annex 4. Glossary continued

Term	Definition or explanation
Foundation subjects	<p>The remaining subjects of the National Curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ art and design ■ citizenship ■ design and technology ■ geography ■ history ■ information and communication technology ■ modern foreign languages ■ music ■ physical education.
Key stages	<p>These are the five stages of the maintained school curriculum between the ages of three and 16 years:</p> <p>Foundation Stage: 3–5 years</p> <p>Key Stage 1: 5–7 years</p> <p>Key Stage 2: 7–11 years</p> <p>Key Stage 3: 11–14 years</p> <p>Key Stage 4: 14–16 years</p>
Pupil referral unit (PRU)	<p>Pupil referral units provide education to children of compulsory school age who, because of illness, exclusion or otherwise, are unable to attend a mainstream or special school.</p>
National qualifications	
Explanation of National Qualification levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Level 1 includes qualifications at level 1 and level 'E' (entry level), such as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs), foundation General National Vocational Qualifications (GNVQs) and other foundation or pre-foundation qualifications. ■ Level 2 includes level 2 NVQs, intermediate GNVQs and precursors (BTEC first certificate or first diploma, City and Guilds Diploma of Vocational Education at intermediate level), GCSEs and other intermediate level qualifications. ■ Level 3 includes level 3 NVQs, advanced GNVQs and precursors (Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) national certificate or national diploma, City and Guilds Diploma of Vocational Education at national level), advanced Vocational Certificates of Education (VCEs), GCE A, A2 and AS levels and other advanced level qualifications.

Term	Definition or explanation
Adult skills	
Adult and community learning	Adult and community learning, provided by councils, the voluntary and community sector and by some further education colleges, is diverse in character and aims to meet the needs and interests of communities and the groups within these. Provision includes 'First Step' courses for those who have not participated in learning for some years and where progression is a primary aim; courses leading to qualifications, especially those that contribute to level 2 qualification targets, and provision for 'Personal and Community Development Learning' (PCDL).
Apprenticeships	Apprenticeships are work-based learning programmes for young people below the age of 25. Learners complete a framework which includes practical training, work towards technical certificates and key skills training. Apprenticeships, which last approximately two years, equate to a level 2 qualification; advanced apprenticeships generally last three years and provide a qualification at level 3. Where appropriate, apprenticeships can also be accessed via Train to Gain.
Employment Zones	Employment Zones, located in areas of high deprivation and need, receive more funding than New Deal programmes, and provide particularly intensive support.
Learning and skills in prisons	Ofsted undertakes judicial service inspections in partnership with HMI Prisons and HMI Probation. Ofsted HMI evaluate the quality of learning and skills in prisons, including young offender institutions and secure units for young people. Learning and skills provision in the community is inspected with HMI Probation across a range of learning providers including work-based and colleges. Prison and probation inspection findings form part of the reports published by HMI Prisons and HMI Probation, and can be found on each inspectorate's website. Separate reports for prison learning and skills are also placed on the Ofsted website.
learndirect	<p>learndirect has been developed by the University for Industry (Ufi), with a remit from government to provide high quality post-16 learning which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ reaches those with few or no skills and qualifications who are unlikely to participate in traditional forms of learning ■ equips people with the skills they need for employability, thereby strengthening the skills of the workforce and increasing productivity ■ is delivered innovatively through the use of new technologies.⁵⁵ <p>Last year saw a major reorganisation by Ufi Ltd of the learndirect arrangements, to begin to focus provision more specifically on literacy and numeracy, and level 2 qualifications. New contracts were placed directly with providers in August 2006 and the new inspection cycle started in November 2006.</p>

⁵⁵ www.learndirect.co.uk.

Annex 4. Glossary continued

Term	Definition or explanation
New Deal	These programmes, funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, are designed to help people improve their employability skills and find work. There are one or more prime contractors in each region, who receive funding and distribute it among a variety of subcontractors. Very much focused around individual need, they comprise a range of elements, such as support with literacy or numeracy, the development of job-seeking skills and the opportunity to work towards relevant qualifications.
nextstep	nextstep is the national information, advice and guidance service for adults. There is one main nextstep contractor in each of the 47 local Learning and Skills Council areas. They subcontract some or all of their provision to a range of specialist providers and agencies. Their main focus is on clients without a level 2 qualification; their target is for at least 45% of clients to enter learning or employment following a nextstep intervention.
Prime contractors	Prime contractors, of which there are 129 in total, receive funding from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to offer employability training; they allocate this to a range of subcontractors, according to local need. This provision is the result of recent restructuring by the DWP, and only five inspections have so far been carried out.
Train to Gain	The Train to Gain initiative enables employers to access free training for employees without a level 2 qualification to undertake training towards one. Skills brokers work with employers to identify their training needs and link them with appropriate training providers.
Workstep	This is provision for learners with a disability or learning difficulty. The aim of Workstep is to enable participants to progress to unsupported employment where this is feasible and, where it is not, to help them improve their skills and develop their potential within their existing, supported work environment.

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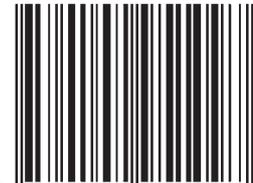
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